

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: Community Action Planning Update
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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide an update on progress rolling out Community Action Planning through out the Cairngorms National Park. It is also to request that the Board agree to fund the three-year partnership project that will roll out community action planning in Badenoch and Strathspey as well as extend the successful B&S Community Development Officer project until 2012.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- a) Notes the progress in developing community action planning within the Cairngorms National Park, on a local and park wide basis.
- b) Agrees to fund the three year Community Action Planning project in Badenoch and Strathspey (to be led by Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey-CVS), that also extends the B&S Community Development Officer project.

Executive Summary

Communities play a vital role in delivering the aims of the National Park. It is therefore important to place a strong emphasis on actively engaging with communities both within and out with the Park, as well as supporting communities to deliver the Park Plan. With the creation of Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs) it is vital to develop a framework that allows communities and the Community Planning Partnerships to come together to collectively deliver the Scottish Governments strategic objectives.

The *"Our Community a Way Forward"* pilot project (2007/08) has been viewed as an overall success by the communities of Grantown on Spey, Cromdale, Advie and Dulnain Bridge. Creating comprehensive actions plans for each community, helping to direct agency resources more effectively in meeting community need, and improving community capacity and involvement. The success of the pilot has stimulated interest from other communities within the Park boundaries to carry out their own community action planning projects.

COMMUNITY ACTION PLANNING UPDATE - FOR DECISION

Strategic Context

National Strategic Context

1. The new Scottish Government National Performance Framework underlines that effective approaches to community engagement and support will contribute to the 'Communities' National Outcome:

"We will have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others"

Of the three related indicators, the following is the most relevant:

"Increase the percentage of adults who rate their neighbourhood as a good place to live"

National Park Plan

2. The Park Plan contains references to communities throughout: in its guiding principles, long term objectives and priorities for action but of particular significance are the following:

Guiding Principle No.3 - "People Participating in the Park- A National Park for People (page 33)

People within and outside the Park should be actively involved in shaping the National Park and its management, building their capacity to do so and encouraging active citizenship. This can be encouraged by:

- a) Operating in an open, transparent and accessible environment where people can easily find any relevant information;
- b) Keeping people with an interest in the Park informed of progress made against the plan and opportunities to get involved;
- c) Developing mechanisms which allow local communities and communities of interest to influence and engage in the decision making process and management of the Park;
- d) Working with young people, people disabilities and those on low incomes. to engage them in shaping the future of the Park;
- e) Supporting local communities to encourage their active involvement in the management of the Park.

Strategic Objectives for Sustainable Communities (page 67)

- d) Strengthen the capacity of local communities and encourage community development building on existing networks, expertise and experience.

Communities should be supported in building their confidence, skills, knowledge and resources to encourage development and activity within communities and effective engagement in shaping the National Park and public policy. Communities should be supported in developing effective community councils, associations and enterprises.

- e) Promote community involvement and more inclusive representation in the management of the National Park.

Local communities should be able to inform and participate in the management of the National Park and be well-informed about its management. Communities should be able to understand the role of public bodies and how they can contribute to and influence their work. Public bodies should have an understanding of the needs and issues at a community level and of how to engage effectively with communities.

Making Tourism and Business More Sustainable Priority for Action (page 108)

Outcome No. vii. Communities will feel that quality of life is improving and that they are able to influence the direction of economic growth within the Park.

Corporate Plan

3. Community Engagement is highlighted in the second of the guiding principles within the 2008/2011) corporate plan: Support and Add Value to Activity; *"Influencing and persuading others (Participating in Community Planning and Catchment Management Planning)"* (p3).
4. In addition, there is a direct achievement (under the Sustainable Tourism and Business priority for Action) that states: "All communities within the Park have community action plans in place that enable communities to work with partners in identifying prioritised actions for their areas and agreeing who leads on these. Allows better targeting of grant resources and other development support" (delivery of this achievement 2012 as opposed to 2011).
5. This paper follows on from the "CNPA's approach to Community Engagement and Support" brought to the Board September 2008. It outlines the success of the original Community Action Planning pilot

project (Our Community a Way Forward), and updates the board on the roll out of similar exercises across the National Park.

6. Under the auspices of the Badenoch and Strathspey Community Planning Partnership, the CNPA worked with public sector partners and the communities of Grantown-on-Spey, Dulnain Bridge, Cromdale and Advie to pilot community-based action planning approaches. The purpose of this was to:
 - a) establish clear baseline information on these communities, especially in relation to housing needs, tourism and other economic/social issues;
 - b) identify local needs and opportunities and a small number of prioritised actions (and fund some early actions);
 - c) build support from both local community based organisations and community planning partners to progress and support these actions;
 - d) develop a simple 'toolkit' that can be used by other local communities to go through a similar process.

7. Feedback from the pilot has proved to be very positive and it has been measured a success on several fronts:
 - a) Attendance for the "community conversations" was very high and responses on the questionnaires exceptional (between 40-50%). People enjoyed the inter-action.
 - b) A comprehensive action plan was created for each community outlining priority issues and identifying lead bodies to follow up. The priorities included "quick wins" so people could see clear actions coming out of the process.
 - c) Longer-term priorities identified in the actions plans were taken on by the community councils (with support from the Community Development officers- Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey) and are being progressed.
 - d) The four pilot communities fed back that they felt the exercise had been extremely worthwhile. They felt they got clear outputs out of the planning exercise and wish to repeat the process in three years time.
 - e) A community toolkit was developed from the pilot project a step-by-step guide to be used to take other communities through the community action planning process.
 - f) Other harder to quantify outcomes included: better relationships created between the Community Planning Partners and community groups. More people volunteering in local activities and a better understanding of delivery of the Park Plan by communities within the Park.

8. Learning points from the pilot included:

- a) The need to keep communities informed of progress every step of the way (through newsletters, media, community council meetings etc)
- b) Acknowledging that each community is different and needs to be approached in a different way, it's important to build on past consultation, so that the community feel that they have been listened to.
- c) Reporting to the Community Planning Partners to ensure agency buy in.

Community Action Planning Roll Out

9. The success of the Community Action Planning pilot has stimulated interest in other communities in the Park:
 - a) **Badenoch and Strathspey:** VABS (Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey) are the lead partner (along with the CNPA, the Highland Council, Highlands & Islands Enterprise) in developing a three-year community action-planning project. Each community in the area has indicated their interest through a feasibility study carried out at the end of 2008. (appendix one)
 - b) **Aberdeenshire:** Ballater, is currently conducting a community action planning exercise: (Ballater – Once Voice... Our Future). The project initiated by the Community Council, has a steering group that includes the Aberdeenshire Council, the CNPA, Marr Area Partnership, Ballater Royal Deeside Ld, and local residents (including young people's reps). The project will be completed (with report and comprehensive action plans) by May 2009. It is hoped to duplicate this project in other communities in the Park working closely with Marr Area Partnership and other local bodies.
 - c) **Moray:** After initial presentations on the pilot project to the communities of Tomintoul and Glenlivet the CNPA is currently liaising with the communities to look at the possibility of supporting community action planning (March 2009). We are currently waiting for the Moray Council to put in place local community planning structures so the work can be progressed.
 - d) **Angus:** Angus Council has been piloting a new approach to localised community planning in Kirriemuir and the Glens. And plans to roll out this approach across Angus, the CNPA has been supportive of this.

Linking Community Action Planning to the Community Planning Partnerships

10. All of the community action planning projects are being reported back to and monitored by the Community Planning Partnerships (through the local planning groups: Marr, Badenoch & Strathspey and Speyside)

This links the community action planning directly to Community Planning and the Single Outcome Agreements in each local authority. It is also creating a structure for continuing active engagement with communities and voluntary organisations.

11. It is important to note that community action planning will build on past consultations with communities (Park Plan, Community Plans). The CNPA need to maximise the opportunities to deliver actions in the Park Plan that are best delivered in partnership with local communities.

Recommendation

12. **That the Board notes the progress in developing community action planning within the Cairngorms National Park, on a local and park wide basis.**

Funding Community Action Planning in Badenoch & Strathspey and the Community Development Officer projects

13. In Badenoch and Strathspey VABS have developed a proposal to roll out Community Action Planning across the area. They will manage the work and employ relevant staff reporting to a steering group of the Community Planning Partnership. VABS is one of a network of 57 independent organisations (CVS network) who are contracted by the Scottish Government to provide development and support services to the voluntary sector, voluntary organisations being one of the key means by which communities are able to identify and achieve their own aims for their future.
14. A "warm up" exercise has already been carried out by VABS. This involved initial contact with existing groups in each community in B&S, in particular Community Councils, Halls, Development Trusts, and other social enterprises. Feedback has been very positive with all communities wishing to take part in the project.
15. The "Community Toolkit" produced from the pilot will be used as a road map in carrying out community action planning. Key Community Planning Partner officers, and members of the communities are been trained in its usage (March 2009).
16. An essential resource in carrying out the community planning project and developing/supporting the priority actions that come out of the process are the VABS Community Development Officers. The total costs of the project include increasing the hours of the CDOs from half to full time. They would maintain their current role: supporting communities in Badenoch and Strathspey to develop community projects, access funding, support local capacity building. In addition

to that they would co-ordinate and lead on supporting local communities in developing their action plans.

17. A contribution (2009/2012) is sought from CNPA towards the Badenoch and Strathspey Community Action Planning project. The Expenditure Justification for this grant support is attached at **Annex 1**.

Recommendation

18. **That the CNPA Board agrees to fund the three-year Community Action Planning project in Badenoch and Strathspey (to be led by Voluntary Action Badenoch & Strathspey-CVS). Confirmed funding from 2009/2011 and in principle, in the next corporate plan for 2011/2012.**

Other Aspects to be Noted

Delivering Sustainability

19. A more joined up approach to community engagement and support means that it is easier to more effectively channel resources towards addressing community priorities both in the short and long term. The project also creates more cohesive working relationship between community public sector agencies and the communities they wish to service.

Delivering a Park for All

20. Using the standards for Community engagement in the community planning process ensures that there is a wider diversity of people involved at all levels with the Park. A key part of that process is identifying stakeholders that might not normally have the opportunity to engage with the Park, identify what stops them getting involved and where practical removing barriers to participation.

Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency

21. A more joined up partnership approach to community support and engagement means a more streamlined targeting of resources, and less duplication of effort. Utilising the Community Planning Partnerships brings communities closer to the agencies who deliver services on the ground, particularly when there is a mechanism for communities to identify for them selves what their priority issues are.

Implications

Financial Implications

22. Grant support to VABS (see EJF) In respect to the park wide community action planning process financial provision has been built into the corporate plan with a budget of 40K per annum (2009/10). Year three

of the community action planning process will be factored into the following corporate plan.

Presentation Implications

23. It is important to present community action plan with the context of Community Planning. There have to be clear, regular reporting mechanisms to the CPPs to promote partner involvement throughout the planning process and in addressing the priority issues that arise from the action plans.

Implications for Stakeholders

24. The project has already had funding approval from the Highland Council, HIE and Leader, and cannot go ahead in its current form without funding from the CNPA.

Next Steps

25. The Board will be kept up to date in the corporate plan reporting.

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