
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: Outcomes of the Cairngorms National Park Land Use Group

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Purpose

To report the outcomes of the land use group established by the board to consider opportunities resulting from recent reports and the government land use study to promote the Park as a focus for action on integrated rural land use; and to seek endorsement for the approach identified by the group.

Recommendations

That the Board endorse the approach set out by the land use group, which is that CNPA:

- a) help to stimulate action in the short-term that develops market options and sustains economic activity in the land-based sector – with immediate priorities being food and drink, timber and renewable energy;*
- b) address wider challenges of the integration of land uses to inform development of the next National Park Plan;*
- c) continue to respond to changing circumstances and opportunities in order to support the economic viability of land-based businesses and their capacity to deliver public benefits.*

Executive Summary

Established by the Board in October 2008 to look at opportunities to respond to current land use challenges highlighted in recent reports, the Land Use Group has taken stock of current challenges and action within the scope of the National Park Plan's land use objectives. It has given a steer on priorities in the short-term focused on supporting economic viability of land-based businesses and identified key work needed to inform the next National Park Plan.

The short-term priorities include a food and drink action plan, woodfuel development plan and guidance and support for renewable energy. The group also identified an increasingly urgent need to address tensions

between land use objectives in order to provide a clear land use strategy either within or alongside the next National Park Plan.

The work of the group is now complete and delivery of these actions will be taken forward through the existing National Park Plan delivery mechanisms.

OUTCOMES OF THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK LAND USE GROUP - FOR DECISION

Background

1. At the board meeting of 31st October 2008 the board approved:

'the establishment of a small time-limited group of members, staff and partners to identify opportunities resulting from recent reports on hills and uplands and the Scottish Government Rural Land Use Study to promote the Park as a focus for action on integrated rural land use.'
2. This decision was against the background of significant challenges facing the land use sector, brought into sharp relief in three recent reports:
 - a) Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) Committee of Inquiry into the Future of Scotland's Hills and Islands;
 - b) Scottish Agricultural College Report on 'Retreat from the Hills';
 - c) National Farmers Union of Scotland 'Manifesto for the Hills'.
3. It was also in response to the Scottish government's Rural Land Use Study which is leading to a more integrated approach to managing the competing uses for rural land. Since October 2008 the economic challenges facing all businesses including land-based businesses have become more severe and the group considered that this added further urgency in addressing these challenges.

Scope

4. Against the broad background above, the group identified tighter parameters for discussion and action and distinguished between short-term actions to be implemented within the current National Park Plan period (until 2012) and longer-term actions to be addressed through development of the next National Park Plan. The scope of discussions about short-term actions was set within the existing outcomes of the National Park Plan – ie it is about how we can best achieve those outcomes in challenging circumstances rather than reviewing our work 'from scratch'. The group did not therefore review all aspects of land use work but focused on what could be most effective and achievable within the current National Park Plan, and what is most important to informing the next plan.
5. The discussion was explicitly based on the underlying principle that the viability of land-based businesses and the markets in which they operate are the basis for delivering a wide range of public benefits and services.

6. In the short-term therefore the focus is to help stimulate action that develops market options and sustains economic activity in the land use sector.
7. In the longer-term, the focus is on sustaining economic activity and managing the interactions of land uses to help ensure land-based businesses are sufficiently robust and adaptable to remain productive and deliver public benefits. It is also on addressing the tensions between land use objectives to help provide clear guidance and inform decisions in the context of the four aims of the National Park.

Short Term

8. In the short-term, the group considered that the greatest challenge to the land use sector, and to delivery of the current National Park Plan, is the economic challenges facing land-based businesses. Therefore our focus should be on stimulating action that develops market options and sustains economic activity in the land use sector.
9. There is a sense of urgency which, at this mid-point of the current plan period, requires us to ensure that the actions we are taking over the next three years are tackling the right things and doing so in the most effective way we can – maintaining responsiveness to changing circumstances.
10. The group therefore considered the scope of actions which can be taken within the next three years, which will help address these challenges and contribute to the outcomes of the current National Park Plan. These are set out in the attached Annexes and include:
 - a) Food and drink action plan
 - b) Woodfuel development plan
 - c) Support and guidance for renewable energy opportunities
 - d) Continued promotion of SRDP
11. The focus is on measures that can be taken relatively easily within the Park, that are within the control of the partners involved in managing the Park. There are of course wider issues of national and European rural policy which we will continue to seek to influence on an ongoing basis. These actions will be taken forward within the existing delivery structures for the National Park Plan.

Longer Term

12. In the longer-term (ie into the next National Park Plan period, 2012 and beyond), the group agreed that the challenge of integrating different and potentially competing land use objectives is becoming more urgent. For example, how do we square targets for woodland

expansion, demand for renewable energy generation, agricultural viability, water management and other pressures?

13. While some of this work can be carried out as part of the next National Park Plan, there is a need to begin parts of it in order to inform the next plan and to provide a framework for decisions. There are a number of building blocks underway including the landscape framework which will address many of these questions. The government land use study is also likely to provide some direction and framework to help address these issues. We should identify what other building blocks are required and carry out work over the next three years in order that we are able to set out a clear land use strategy either within or alongside the next National Park Plan.
14. Annex 1 summarises the actions;
Annex 2 sets out the objectives of the Woodfuel Action Plan to be delivered through contract with Highland Birchwoods;
Annex 3 sets out the proposed scope for the Food and Drink Action Plan – please note this is at a draft stage and developing through discussions with partners.
15. Please note annexes 2 and 3 are provided for information and comment - Members are not being asked to agree the detail of these plans through this paper.

Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP)

16. SRDP is the most significant source of funding support for land management. The implementation of SRDP over the last year has highlighted a number of challenges in the scope and administration of the scheme, which appear to be seen as a barrier to take-up by some. In the current economic circumstances access to SRDP support is even more vital to achieving the aims of the Park through land management and CNPA will continue its positive approach to seeking the best out of SRDP for the Park as a key strand of our support to land-based businesses.
17. A review of the collective experience of SRDP in the Park over the last year, including the work of the Land Management Support Officers, will be brought to the board for discussion on 15th May, drawing together the results of current engagement with RPACs, advisors and land managers. This will also update members on the review of SRDP commissioned by the Scottish Government.

Recommendation

18. **The Land Use Group has taken stock of current challenges and action within the scope of the National Park Plan's land use objectives. It has given a steer on priorities in the short-term to help support economic viability of land-based businesses and identified key work needed to inform the next National Park Plan.**
19. The Board is therefore asked to endorse the approach set out by the land use group, which is that CNPA:
 - a) *help to stimulate action in the short-term that develops market options and sustains economic activity in the land-based sector – with immediate priorities being food and drink, timber and renewable energy;*
 - b) *address wider challenges of the integration of land uses to inform development of the next National Park Plan;*
 - c) *continue to respond to changing circumstances and opportunities in order to support the economic viability of land-based businesses and their capacity to deliver public benefits.*

Consultation

20. The land use group comprised five board members: Sue Walker, Eric Baird, Marcus Humphrey, Alastair MacLennan, Eleanor Mackintosh; with input from SNH, Scottish Enterprise and the Macaulay Institute. Wider consultation on the development and delivery of all the work flowing from this will take place through existing delivery and advisory networks.

Policy Context

21. The work identified directly contributes to the outcomes of the National Park Plan, specifically those relating to the integrating land management support, but in turn to delivery of wider objectives. It also contributes to the healthcheck on delivery of the National Park Plan that we will be undertaking this year with partners, to ensure we remain focused on the most effective actions.
22. The work contributes directly to the achievements of the corporate plan, notably: *'tailored public support and advice for land managers within the Park meets their needs and is co-ordinated at a landscape scale'*.
23. Delivery of the work will be scheduled through the operational plans for the coming three years.

24. More broadly, the work is directly relevant to the Scottish Government's Rural Land Use Study and we will seek to make direct links into this study where possible.

Delivering Sustainability

25. The purpose is to support the sustainability of land-based businesses in the Park and in turn their ability to sustain delivery of a wide range of public benefits. There is also a longer term need to address the tensions between land use objectives in order to deliver sustainability.

Delivering A Park for All

26. There are no direct implications on A Park for All.

Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency

27. This work contributes to a mid-term review of the National Park Plan delivery and seeks to ensure that in changing circumstances, we focus our resources on those actions that will be most effective and efficient in delivering the outcomes of the National Park Plan, and make effective links to our partners' priorities and work programmes.

Implications

Financial Implications

28. There are financial costs to the actions proposed which are planned for within the 2009/10 operational plan and future operational plans.
29. Financial contributions and staff time commitment from partners are being secured for the woodfuel development plan and the food and drink action plan.

Presentational Implications

30. This is an opportunity to demonstrate the value of the National Park through partners coming together in response to challenging circumstances and addressing issues that are being raised on a national scale. The annual progress report on the National Park Plan, currently in preparation, provides an opportunity to communicate the steps being taken.

Implications for Stakeholders

31. Stakeholders will be directly involved in the further development and delivery of the work outlined through the delivery teams and other forums for engagement. At this stage, the work outlined is at the scoping stage so there will be wide ranging opportunities for stakeholders to engage over the next three years in both the short-term actions and the longer-term, policy development.

Next Steps

32. The role of the land-use group established by the board is now completed and the group will close as intended. Delivery of the actions proposed will be taken forward with partners through the National Park Plan delivery mechanisms and reported to the board through the usual National Park Plan and Corporate Plan reports.

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ANNEX 1: SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

| Short-term | | |
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| Action | Objectives | Related Work |
| Prepare and implement a food and drink action plan ¹ | Identify opportunities for adding value to local produce; Identify potential delivery mechanisms for food and drink related projects; Prioritise potential projects and identify resource implications. | See separate project scope |
| Prepare and implement a sustainable timber use plan ² | To support the development of markets for timber in the NP. | Woodfuel development plan already initiated; links to sustainable design guide; |
| Develop guidance and support for renewable energy generation and use | To encourage and guide an increase in renewable generation and use compatible with the special qualities of the NP. | Link to supplementary planning guidance on renewable energy; SEPA guidance on hydro schemes; LA strategies |
| Promote opportunities for SRDP funding and facilitate collaborative projects | To support land based businesses and realise potential of SRDP to fund high value public benefits. | Build on current LMSO support; links to catchment management plans |
| Seek opportunities arising from the SG Rural Land Use study to trial new approaches or build on work in the NP | To promote the NP as a place for integrated land use | |
| Long-term | | |
| Address the policy and management tensions between land uses to guide decisions, specifically- woodland expansion, renewable energy, agriculture, moorland management | To help manage competing demands on land within the four aims of the Park and be able to target priorities within a clear land use strategy. | Landscape framework; Scottish Government Rural Land Use Study, Forest and Woodland Framework, SNH/LUC climate change scenarios for landscape. |
| Promote land management support mechanisms based on | To move to an increasingly integrated system of support based | Links to current pilot work on carbon flux in moorland and land use |

¹ See Annex 3 project scope for A Local Food and Drink Action Plan

² See Annex 2 for objectives of the Woodfuel Action Plan, the first component of a sustainable timber plan

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| the value of public benefits and services provided | on the value of public benefits. | carbon management capability ³ ; |
|--|----------------------------------|---|

³ CNPA is currently entering into partnership with Macaulay and CEH to develop methodologies to assess the carbon management capability of land uses using Glenlivet Estate as a case study

ANNEX 2: OBJECTIVES OF WOODFUEL ACTION PLAN - FOR INFORMATION

1. Working with a steering group comprising the funding partners and other key stakeholders the project will research and develop a Woodfuel Action Plan for the Cairngorm National Park. This will involve completion of the tasks detailed below, outputs from which will provide the main body of the action plan.
2. Work on the plan will be completed by the end of March 2009.
3. In addition, the project will also organise two events, a stakeholder workshop to both inform development of the plan and generate support for it, and a launch event which will feature formal adoption of the plan by key signatories to a "master" document.

Setting up a project steering group

4. This will help to ensure that the plan is both relevant and has the support of key stakeholders and will have an important role in informing the plan, reviewing progress, and where appropriate, contributing to key tasks. It will also provide continuity by comprising some of the signatories to the plan, and facilitating and monitoring implementation.

Mapping existing and potential sources of woodfuel supply and identifying potential demand

5. A GIS database of existing woodfuel activity (including both suppliers and end-users) will be established together with an indicative assessment of existing woodfuel resources and potential heat demand. This will aid identification of opportunities to develop clusters and minimize carbon footprints. Areas where there is potential to expand raw material supply will also be identified. The results of this work will be used to set realistic targets for wood fuel market expansion and to assess potential economic, environmental and social impacts of their realisation.

Determining local skills capacity, and addressing shortfalls

6. The plan will identify existing organisations which could contribute to the supply chain, and to identify shortfalls in skills and equipment and the mechanisms to rectify them.

Improving access to information for, and linkages between, end users, and for all parts of the supply chain

7. Poor access to advice and information at all stages of the supply chain is a major constraint on further woodfuel development in the Highlands. The plan will highlight opportunities for linkages to existing

projects and advisory services and develop a PR and marketing strategy detailing actions to raise the profile of the woodfuel sector and facilitate linkages between suppliers, consumers, funders and regulators. Awareness raising in schools will form an important part of these strategies.

Improving understanding of fuel quality

8. Fuel quality is crucial for the success of woodfuel systems and it is essential that both suppliers and end-users have clear understanding of its importance. A substantial body of knowledge on this subject has been built up during previous projects, and the plan will include a series of actions to disseminate this knowledge through seminars and publications.

Disseminating best practice in woodfuel resource management to ensure sustainability and enhanced landscape and biodiversity values

9. The future sustainability of woodfuel use in both environmental and economic terms is highly dependent on the integration of forest management for woodfuel with other forest management goals. The action plan will include a programme of events and publications to disseminate best practice guidance on key topics in this area.

Ensuring linkages with other projects and priorities for landscape management and biodiversity, particularly Forest Habitat Networks

10. Forest management for woodfuel has the potential to contribute to biodiversity and conservation objectives by providing incentives for active forest management. The plan will identify opportunities to develop linkages with environmental projects with complementary aims.

Providing a context for, and linkages with national renewable energy priorities and current projects such as CLIM-ATIC, Make It Be and PelleTime, and identifying options for attracting additional funding

11. The plan will provide a framework for the delivery of current initiatives in the Park area, and for producing applications for further funding to facilitate achievement of its operational objectives.

Assessing the costs and potential economic impact of all the above in terms of business start ups, local employment and local added value

12. The action plan will be fully costed and include an economic assessment of the anticipated market development outputs, and proposals for monitoring progress.