
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: Operational Plan for 2009-10

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Purpose

To present the proposed plan of work and associated financial allocations for the coming financial year.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- a) Approve the proposed operational plan for 2009/10;
- b) Note the particular challenges highlighted at paragraphs 13-16, and the proposed approach to these in the coming year.

Executive Summary

The proposed Operational Plan for 2009/10 sets out the range of activities through which the CNPA will deliver the second year of the approved Corporate Plan for 2008/11.

The Operational Plan has been prepared by Management team, through the various internal Programme teams set up to coordinate our work programmes and ensure these are lined up with the work of partners in delivering the National Park Plan – the governing principles for us are supporting and adding value to the work of other partners, as well as delivering functions ourselves where appropriate.

The Operational Plan's detailed budgets will be presented to the finance Committee in advance of the Board Meeting. The Operational Plan itself is presented to the Board to allow members to ensure that the overall direction and scope of activity is in keeping with the overarching framework set out in the Authority's three year Corporate Plan.

The Operational Plan will provide the basis for work by staff over the coming year, and the approval of associated expenditure.

OPERATIONAL PLAN FOR 2009-10 - FOR DECISION

Introduction

1. The Organisation's Corporate Plan 2008-11 sets out our strategic objectives - what we aim to achieve over the 3-year period. The Operational Plan sets out the detail of how we will do that in a particular year – the activities, and associated financial allocations. The Corporate Plan, and hence the operational plan takes its structure from the approved National Park Plan's its seven priorities for actions, with a further three added to account for the corporate and statutory activities.
2. A summary of the 1009/10 Operational Plan is shown below

	Major Achievement Headings in Corporate Plan	Total CNPA cost * £000	Ex* cost to CNPA £000
Priorities for Action in National Park Plan	1. Conserving & enhancing Biodiversity and Landscapes	315	172
	2. Integrating public support for Land Management	408	244
	3. Supporting sustainable deer management	69	32
	4. Providing high quality opportunities for outdoor access	492	347
	5. Making tourism and Business more sustainable	666	433
	6. Making Housing more affordable and sustainable	446	133
	7. Raising Awareness and Understanding of the Park	769	569
Internal and statutory functions	8. Strategy and communications	421	133
	9. Planning and Development Management	839	36
	10. Corporate Services	442	65
Total		4,867	2,164

*Total cost = CNPA staff costs, plus "external" costs, which are the monies paid to out other parties for work done, or as contributions to projects or grant.

How the Plan is put together

3. In essence the Operational Plan sets out the organisation's human and financial resource "inputs", to achieve the outputs/outcomes set out in the 3 year corporate plan. The plan is put together by Management Team, in conjunction with the various programme and project teams by:

- a) considering the CNPA's contribution to the National park Plan, based on our guiding principles in the corporate plan of:
 - i. acting as coordinator and catalyst;
 - ii. supporting actions/projects with funding;
 - iii. facilitating with help/advice/training;
 - iv. influencing and persuading others;
 - v. acting as a source of innovation, encouraging and initiating new approaches and new ideas for sustainable care and management of a special place;
 - vi. delivering actions and functions directly where appropriate (e.g. planning and development management, and access management).

- b) Estimating how much money we need to put into activities/projects etc delivered by external parties ("operational" costs);

- c) Estimating the staff time needed to deliver various actions in the plan. Although not precise, this does provide a check on the "deliverability" of the plan within our staff capacity; it also allows us to calculate a total cost of delivering the various sections of the Plan (i.e. cost of staff time plus "operational" costs).

Using the Plan

- 4. The plan is a key element of the organisation's financial management process, through which our activities and our expenditure plans are established and then monitored. This is done through regular reports to the Finance Committee on budgetary performance, regular updates to the Board on delivery of the Corporate/Operational Plan, and through the role of the finance Committee in approving items of expenditure.

- 5. The Operational Plan is also a core component of the performance management framework. It sets out at a detailed level what activities and projects we will undertake; it is therefore a key element for staff appraisal, in which targets for the year are established and training and development needs identified.

- 6. The detailed budgets in the Operational Plan will be considered by the Finance Committee prior to the Board's consideration of this paper. The Committee's delegated responsibility is to ensure that we are deploying our staff and financial resources to achieve the outcomes and outputs sought in the Corporate Plan, and hence the operational Plan.

7. This Operational Plan paper presented to the Board does not include the same level of detail; it is presented so that the Board can ensure that the overall direction and scope of activity proposed for the coming year are in keeping with the overarching vision set out in the Corporate Plan. Regular reports will be put to the Board on delivery of the Corporate Plan/Operational Plan throughout the year.

Reporting and Monitoring

8. The Operational Plan must be viewed in the context of the Corporate Plan, the National Park Plan, and Scottish Government Performance Framework (the overarching purpose and 15 national outcomes). This makes for a uniquely complex set of reporting arrangements (already established) but an inevitable reflection of our coordinating role:
 - a) Four-monthly reports to the finance committee on budgetary monitoring;
 - b) Four-monthly reports to the whole Board on delivery of the Corporate Plan and Operational Plan lines of activity, as well as progress towards the corporate plan milestones;
 - c) As part of these in-year corporate plan reports, a report on progress with key performance indicators to show how we are contributing to Scottish Government Outcomes;
 - d) Four-monthly reports to the Board (at the same time as the above) on delivery of the National Park Plan (which includes delivery by partners, not just CNPA);
 - e) Full year reports on Corporate Plan (our annual report) and National Park Plan (annual Park Plan report).

Financial Implications

9. The recommended Operational Plan for 2009/10 seeks to establish a balance in resource allocation across the Authority's relatively wide range of activities, while recognising that some aspects of delivery are inherently more resource intensive than others (see Annex 1). The prime examples of this are the planning and development management function, and the job of coordinating and overseeing the delivery of the National Park Plan. Both of these are functions which statutorily fall to the CNPA, and which depend on input of staff time rather than payment of funds to outside parties. The balance of financial allocation also reflects the anticipated availability of other potential funding partners for various aspects of activity (this is considered later under Specific Issues).
10. In line with financial management policy agreed with the Finance Committee, the Operational Plan for 2009/10 is "over-programmed": i.e. the total of financial allocations assigned to activities is in excess of

the amounts currently available to the Authority from Scottish Government grant and other income. This practice allows for slippage in the progress of projects with financial implications, which often arise through delays in agreement of multi-partner funding contributions and/or project delivery timescales. It also allows for initial financial allocations to be made to projects while third party income levels are uncertain.

11. The key financial implications arising from the Operational Plan will continue to be considered by the Finance Committee.

Presentational Implications

12. The Operational Plan is presented in Annex 1 in the format of the Cairngorms National Park Plan and its Priorities for Action. It is important to keep a focus on those priorities for the duration of the National Park Plan (2007-2012) given they form the basis of our shared commitment to action with partners, and have been approved by Ministers.
13. We also show how we are contributing to the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework, and in particular how we are delivering the Scottish Government's National Outcomes. Each line of activity in our operational plan is allocated to one of the Scottish Government outcomes, and we can therefore show how our Operational Plan is aligned with the Scottish Government's performance framework. In reality there are multiple links between our objectives and the national outcomes; for simplicity we have sought to identify the closest alignment.
14. We have therefore identified (as in our Corporate Plan) an alignment with 9 of the 15 National outcomes, and through these to the Scottish Government's purpose (to create a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to Flourish, through increasing sustainable growth). This is shown in Annex 2.

Specific Issues for 2009/10

15. ***Partnership Working:*** It has become increasingly challenging recently to implement our principle of stimulating partnership projects, and encouraging our partners to play their part in delivering the Park Plan (and hence satisfying section 14 of the National Parks Scotland Act, requiring all public bodies to have regard to the National Park Plan). Increasing budget pressure all round is leading to partners either not contributing in the first place to projects and initiatives, or pulling out at a late stage. We aim to tackle this through mid-term Park Plan discussions with partners, to establish a clear understanding of what projects can still be delivered by the end of the Plan period.

16. The corollary is that we are increasingly left in the position of having initiated successful projects several years ago with partner funding, and with those sources of funding drying up we either have to agree to continue as sole funders, terminate the project/initiative, or alternatively find a fundamentally new approach.
17. There may, in addition to the budgetary pressures, be a waning of interest in and focus on the Cairngorms National Park. After successful establishment, the National Park may have “slipped off the radar”; it is quietly doing well, and is not a campaigning issue in the headlines. We need to consider our stakeholder engagement, and how we renew enthusiasm for the UK’s largest National Park and its potential for significant delivery of benefits for Scotland, and for the Scottish Government’s national purpose.
18. **Coordination.** The role of coordinating the delivery of the National Park Plan is largely “hidden”, but nevertheless crucially important. It depends on input of staff time across the whole organisation; it is the essence of our “leadership” role; it is something for which we probably get little credit on a day to day basis (it isn’t high profile or newsworthy), but our success on this front will determine how good a story we can tell on behalf of everyone about the partnership working in the Cairngorms National Park. It follows that we must be effective in this role now that we have the National Park Plan in place, which means we must be increasingly good at developing the right working relationships with our partners and stakeholders – it is as much about working with people as with issues.
19. A number of consequences flow from this analysis for how we operate in 2009/10:
 - a) We must think much further ahead about innovative solutions to the projects whose funding is known to be drying up in the short to medium term: LBBT/CAP is one example of an excellent project which we do not want to lose. The finance Committee has already identified that a fundamentally new approach is needed if we are to continue, and will be receiving a further report in due course, which may have some wider applicability to other projects. More generally, there is scope for using our informal Board discussion sessions to brainstorm new approaches, well in advance of seeking finance committee approval.
 - b) Staff will need to be increasingly conscious of these challenges, and will need to work with Finance Committee in a more proactive way, based on presenting real options to the Committee for consideration well in advance of approvals for

significant expenditure. Management Team are currently re-viewing the programme/project management arrangements to reflect this, and will be bringing a paper to Finance Committee.

- c) We must concentrate on looking for ways of giving ownership to other stakeholders of much of what we have undertaken at the start of the National Park's life. The establishment of the Cairngorms Outdoor access Trust is a good example of how to do this, involving a degree of "letting go", but at the same time the creation of a mechanism which will have access to funds that the CNPA would not, and hence achieve more. Another good example is the support to the Cairngorms Business Partnership proposal, which should lead to a stronger organisation of stakeholders capable to taking forward the work which would otherwise stay with CNPA in perpetuity.
- d) We must continue to establish a good understanding with our partners of the value and importance of National Parks to Scotland, and turn that into effective working partnerships for the benefit of the Cairngorms National park. This implies a role for both staff and Members.

Jane Hope
March 2009

**Annex 1: CNPA Operational Plan 2009/10 : Delivery of National Park Plan
Priorities for Action**

Priority for Action	Summary of Key activities and deliverables in 2009/10
1.Conserving & enhancing Biodiversity and Landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Progress Landscape framework - Landscape character assessment complete; qualities assessment complete. -Biological records system for NP in place through NESBReC, including website; -Deliver, facilitate and support projects on priority species and habitats delivered LBAP -Expand raptor watch to Highland -Establish Community Heritage Project with project officer in place.
2.Integrating public support for Land Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -LBBT continuation – consider future development -Second year of LMSOs – review of SRDP in National Park; n/o RDCs in place; -Deliver catchment management actions on Spey and Dee -Projects on mitigation/adaptation to climate change: Low Carbon estates; wo development plan; land management for carbon capture capability; sustainable management demonstrations; Case study in CLIM-atic project.
3.Supporting sustainable deer management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -open days with estates and schools -continue socio economic study of estates; measure changes vs baseline -support CDAG; develop strategic deer framework to reduce conflict and estate monitoring.
4.Providing high quality opportunities for outdoor access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -complete Local Inquiry; adopt Core Paths Plan; -support path work by assisting development and delivery of COAT business plan -prepare for Speyside way extension(depending upon Ministerial approval); -Service and support CLOAF; uphold access rights; -Hold training and guidance events on outdoor access; refresh publicity material -promote guidance on directional path signs; -template for community path leaflets; -Support H Hopper and C explorer ; consider long term solutions; -Promote health benefits of outdoor access; further develop paths to health sc
5.Making tourism and Business more sustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -support DMOs, CCC and others in forming Cairngorms Business Partnership as u business voice and action in National Park; -Roll out visitor payback scheme; -Economic baseline study (comparator with 2003); -continue delivery of ec/social benefits through LEADER; -roll out Community Action Planning; -develop food &drink strategy; -visitor survey (comparison with 2004/5) ; -businesses develop environmental plans (target 40)
6.Making Housing more affordable and sustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -support Rural Housing enablers; -Collect/interpret housing data;

Priority for Action	Summary of Key activities and deliverables in 2009/10
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -complete sustainable water guide; -complete and adopt sustainable design guide; -housing policy in Local Plan adopted following PLI; implemented through development management function, including major development projects in Park.
7.Raising Awareness and Understanding of the Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -feasibility study on point of entry markers as part of boundary extension; -installation of pre-arrival signs; -roll out use of park Brand at TICs; -install CNP info and panoramas in communities and other key places; -roll out interpretation workshops and DVD; -grant aid 8 ranger services; coordinate work of 12; -Support and deliver Cairngorms awareness and Pride courses; -John Muir Award: continue support and delivery; plan future ; -develop outreach programmes following joint study by SNH, CNPA, LL&TTNPA; -develop curriculum for excellence programme based on action plans from 5 L work on education website -support various publications; -launch web portal for Park; -research on special qualities – fill gaps.
8.Strategy and communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -coordinate delivery of NP Plan with partners, and monitoring of progress, with other teams and strategy Group. Mid-term “health check” on progress. -publish second annual report on progress with NP Plan; -hold state of the park seminar. Start thinking on preparation for next NP Plan; -publish annual report; Gaelic language plan; other corporate publications -stakeholder engagement events; opinion poll; publish Parklife -ongoing management of effective website and intranet; -media relations.
9.Planning and Development Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -complete and publish range of supplementary planning guidance; -complete LPI, consider reporters’ findings, and adopt Local Plan; -develop implementation strategy; -continue delivery of PDM service – internal review of arrangements after 5 years -continue development of fully functional e-planning regime by 2010.
10.Corporate Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -continue coordination and delivery of good governance, internal control systems, consultative processes, monitoring of performance management systems; secure Value in service delivery; -support organisational service delivery through training and development; -develop long term accommodation plans; -continue to contribute as appropriate to SEARS; -develop plan to meet needs of requirement from Strategic review of for “share” with LL&TT NPA; provide support to LL&TT on formalised basis; -implement greening plan and initiatives; -realise 2% efficiency savings; -implement internal equalities plan; encourage others to meet best practice standards

Priority for Action	Summary of Key activities and deliverables in 2009/10
TOTAL	

*total cost – CNPA staff costs, plus “external” delivery costs, namely those monies paid to outside sources (grant, contributions to partner projects, consultancy etc)

Annex 2: CNPA Operational Plan 2009/10: Contribution to Scottish Government Outcomes

*Total investment represents staff costs as well as operational costs.

Ref	Scottish Government National Outcome
2	We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for people.
6	We live longer, healthier lives
7	We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society
10	We live in well designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need
11	We have strong, resilient supportive communities where people take responsibility for their actions and how they affect others.
12	We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations
13	We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity
14	We reduce the local and global impact environmental impact of our consumption and production
15	Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to needs.
	Total Investment from Scottish Government Funds Allocated to Cairngorms National Park Authority