

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: NATIONAL PARK PLAN ADOPTION AND
IMPLEMENTATION

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Purpose

To formally adopt the approved Cairngorms National Park Plan 2007 and agree the proposed implementation mechanisms and next steps.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- a) Formally adopt the Park Plan, noting that the Park Authority is required to review the Park Plan by 2012, and that Scottish Ministers and public bodies must, in exercising functions so far as affecting a National Park, have regard to the National Park Plan as adopted.
- b) Agree the arrangements for focusing the collective efforts of all partners on the delivery of the Plan (paragraphs 9 to 24), and enabling the CNPA to exercise its role of ensuring the collective and coordinated delivery of the Park's aims.

Executive Summary

The completion and approval by Ministers of the National Park Plan is a significant milestone for the CNPA and its partners. This paper requests the Board to formally adopt the Cairngorms National Park Plan 2007 and sets out the proposed implementation mechanisms which aim to ensure the CNPA effectively co-ordinates the collective delivery of the plan. The paper asks the board to agree the implementation arrangements, as endorsed by the Panel on Joined Up Government in December, as follows:

- a) *Operational delivery:* Seven Delivery teams, to focus on the delivery of the action plans for each of the priorities for action;
- b) *Advice and Communication:* Three Advisory Forums to ensure advice on overall direction, effectiveness in delivering objectives, and communication of progress to a wide range of interested parties;
- c) *Strategic direction:* Panel on Joined Up Government (to be renamed Cairngorms National Park Strategy Group) to maintain an overview of strategic direction.

NATIONAL PARK PLAN ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION - FOR DECISION

Background

1. The Cairngorms National Park Authority was established in September 2003 with the responsibility for setting the strategic direction to achieve the Park aims through the production and co-ordination of the collective delivery of the National Park Plan. Following three years of extensive discussions and consultation with a wide range of partners and interested parties a draft Park Plan along with a State of the Park Report and Strategic Environmental Assessment Report were submitted for formal public consultation between April and June 2006.
2. Once comments had been analysed and responded to a final Park Plan along with an accompanying consultation report and Strategic Environment Assessment Statement were approved by the Board on 1st December 2006, endorsed by our public sector partners through the Panel of Joined-up Government on 4th December 2006 before being submitted to Ministers for approval on 7th December 2006.
3. Sarah Boyack, Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development announced Ministerial approval of the Park Plan on 15th March 2007 without any requests for modifications. A few suggestions for minor changes relating to references to the National Context sections have been incorporated into the final version of the plan.
4. The Minister said:
"I am delighted to approve, at the same time, the first ever Plans for both of Scotland's National Parks. This demonstrates the significant progress that has been made since the two National Parks were set up several years ago. The Parks were established to protect the outstanding natural beauty of the areas. These Plans are integral to that objective whilst also addressing other important issues such as living and working in the Park, tourism and outdoor recreation. The Park Plan is a shared vision for the future of the Park. I would like to congratulate all the organisations, communities and businesses who have been involved and, in particular the Park Authority, which has taken the lead in the preparation of the Plan".
5. All our public sector partners and members of the various advisory forums, as well as the Association of Cairngorms Community Councils and the Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce, and local MSPs and MPs have been informed of the Plan's approval. A media announcement was sent out to the Scottish national and local media. Copies of the final Park Plan will be distributed to Ministers and our public sector partners and are available to any interested parties on request, free of charge. The Park Plan, along with the supporting documents, are also available on the CNPA website.

Adoption of the National Park Plan

6. As indicated in the National Parks Act (Scotland) 2000 section 12, when the plan is approved the National Park Authority must:
 - a) Adopt the plan (as approved) as its National Park Plan,
 - b) Send a copy of it to the Scottish Ministers and every local authority any part of whose area is within the National Park,
 - c) Keep a copy of it for inspection by any person at any reasonable time and keep copies for sale at a reasonable price, and
 - d) Publicise it in such manner as it thinks fit.
7. From the previous paragraphs it is clear that (b), (c) and (d) have been done. It remains for the Board to formally adopt the Plan, as approved by Ministers (bearing in mind there were no changes from the Plan submitted) so that its legal status can take effect, the important elements of this being:
 - a) It is a material consideration in respect of planning (Schedule 5, paragraph 18 of the 2000 Act;
 - b) The CNPA is required to review the plan within 5 years; and
 - c) Public bodies and Scottish Ministers must “have regard to” the Plan as adopted when exercising functions that affect the National Park.

Recommendation

8. **That the Board formally adopt the Park Plan, noting that the Park Authority is required to review the Park Plan by 2012 and that Scottish Ministers and public bodies must, in exercising functions so far as affecting a National Park, have regard to the National Park Plan as adopted.**

Implementation of the National Park Plan

9. With the Park Plan approved and formally adopted by the CNPA Board, work can now commence on the implementation of the National Park Plan. The biggest challenge for the CNPA is ensuring a truly integrated approach to managing the National Park and delivering the National Park Plan because of the involvement of many different agencies and partners in delivery and the range of different interests and policies which are affected.
10. In order to successfully meet this challenge, we must develop a way of working which allows us to demonstrate best practice in partnership working and provide opportunities for the range of different interests to contribute and get involved in the management of the Park. This means we need to establish mechanisms which allow us to deliver the actions and outcomes associated with the plan while also ensuring all interested parties are kept informed of progress and have a means to contribute and share their views with the CNPA Board and its partners. We are not starting from scratch in this respect – very good working relationships have developed with our partners during the process of putting the plan together, and there is a real willingness to make the Plan work for the good of the Park; and existing Advisory

Forums have played an essential part in getting us to this point. In addition, it is essential that a strategic overview is maintained so that longer term issues are identified and taken into account.

11. We therefore see three strands to the implementation arrangements, as endorsed by the Panel on Joined Up Government in December:
 - a) *Operational delivery*: Seven Delivery teams, to focus on the delivery of the action plans for each of the priorities for action;
 - b) *Advice and Communication*: Three Advisory Forums to ensure advice on overall direction, effectiveness in delivering objectives, and communication of progress to a wide range of interested parties;
 - c) *Strategic direction*: Panel on Joined Up Government (to be renamed Cairngorms National Park Strategy Group) to maintain an overview of strategic direction.

Operational Delivery Mechanism

12. The Park Plan sets out a long-term framework identifying three strategic objectives and seven shorter-term priorities for action to be delivered over the next five years. To progress the implementation of the plan it is proposed that we focus the CNPA and its partners' activities around the seven priorities for action namely:
 - a) Conserving and enhancing biodiversity and landscapes
 - b) Integrating public support for land management
 - c) Supporting sustainable deer management
 - d) Providing high quality opportunities for outdoor access
 - e) Making tourism and business more sustainable
 - f) Making housing more affordable and sustainable
 - g) Raising awareness and understanding of the Park.
13. To mirror these, and to ensure that the CNPA itself is "joined up", Internal Co-ordination Teams have been established which bring together CNPA staff from across the organisation to consider how we can best support the delivery of each priority for action.
14. To bring all the delivery partners together with a focus on action, it is proposed seven delivery teams are created with the responsibility for planning, implementing, monitoring and reporting on the actions and five year outcomes associated with each priority for action. A CNPA member of staff will act as the project manager for each team and relevant members from partner organisations will be invited to participate. Ideally, the team will be chaired by a member from the lead organisation who has the most contribution to make in delivering the priority for action. These will be primarily operational in nature and details of the delivery team's remit are given Annex 1.

Advisory and Communication Mechanism

15. As the priority for action delivery teams are focused on getting things done they will tend to be fairly small, involving those partners who will deliver particular actions and outcomes. In order to allow the many other interested parties and valued partners to influence and contribute to the implementation of the National Park Plan it is proposed we establish three advisory forums which will focus on the strategic themes set out in the National Park Plan namely:
 - a) Conversing and enhancing the Park
 - b) Living and working in the Park
 - c) Enjoying and understanding the Park.
16. These forums will ensure the Board's decisions and actions take into account the views of others. It is proposed these forums should act as sounding boards and a source of ideas and advice from a wide range of partners, stakeholders and 'customers'. This aim will be reflected in the membership and how the meetings are managed and run. Membership needs to be wide and inclusive, and needs to draw in people who can bring soundly based advice to the table, either because they have particular experience or expertise, and/or they can reflect the views of a body of people with legitimate interests, and are able to contribute to the debate in a constructive way. It follows that meetings should be chaired and serviced in a way that facilitates discussion, and focuses that discussion on the key issues for the Cairngorms National Park. These are not intended to be decision-making meetings- they are advisory.
17. To avoid duplication, the three advisory forums will evolve from and replace the Integrated Land Management, Economic and Social Development and ViSIT forums, all of which have worked well in the last 3 years. In many ways they will continue to operate in a similar way, but with a slight shift of emphasis to providing an overview of the progress being made across the piece but from the perspective of the Park Plan's strategic themes.
18. These forums will provide a networking opportunity for people with a range of different interests, a listening mechanism for the CNPA Board and partner organisations and an effective communication mechanism which can reach a wide range of interest groups and audiences. Details of the remit etc of the Advisory Forums are set out in Annex 2.

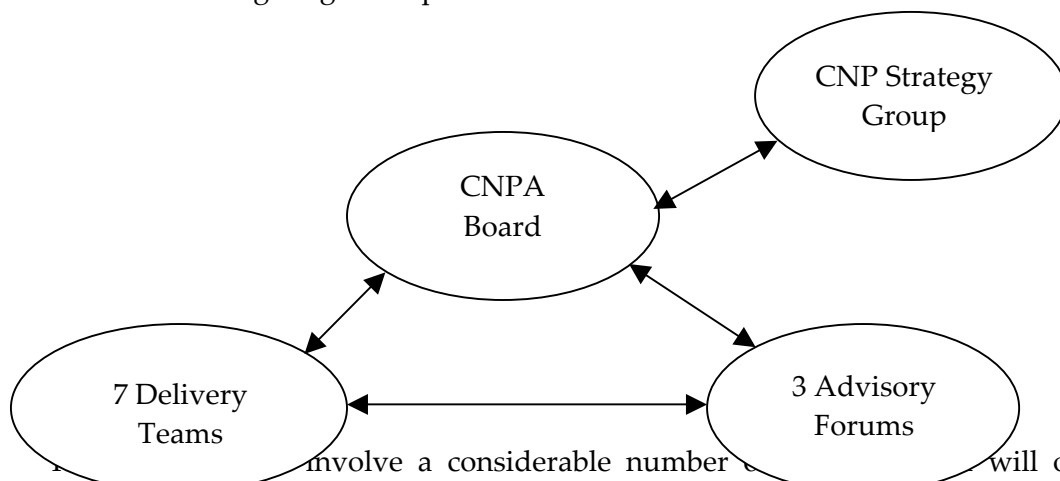
Strategic Planning Mechanism

19. It is proposed that the Panel of Joined Up Government (JUG) continue to meet on an annual basis as a strategic panel which will focus on the longer-term issues affecting the Park. As suggested by the last meeting of the Panel, in order to include the strategic interests of our key non-public sector partners it is suggested the Chairs of the Association of Cairngorms Community Councils, Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce and Scottish Environment LINK are invited to join the group which will be renamed the Cairngorms National Park Strategy Group.

20. It may be helpful to have input to the Strategy Group through a ‘think tank’ which brings together academics and strategic scenario planners, helping to keep the thinking of the Strategy Group informed by the latest ideas and impact of various potential scenarios affecting the National Park.

Overview of Arrangements: Role of CNPA Board and Staff

21. Is it important to note that what is outlined here is a set of arrangements designed to ensure a collective and coordinated delivery of the Park Plan with all our partners – the CNPA Board have lead responsibility, but clearly that responsibility can only be delivered in conjunction with partners. The CNPA will service the various groupings, and in some cases (and initially maybe in all cases) will chair the meetings, but the objective is to ensure that those best placed to lead Groups will do so, and we hope this will be partners, not always the CNPA.
22. The Delivery Teams, the Advisory Forums, and Strategy Group are not strictly hierarchical, and there is not a prescriptive “mapping” of certain delivery teams onto certain Advisory Forums. Clearly some Advisory Forums will have a particular interest in particular priorities for action and the work of associated delivery teams – for example, the essentially tourism interests of the current ViSIT forum are most likely to be covered by the Forum on Enjoying an Understanding, which will tend to be most closely interested in the Delivery Teams working on: Raising Awareness and Understanding, Making Tourism and Business more Sustainable, and Opportunities for Outdoor Access. But that is not exclusive, and the Forum would also be interested in the other priorities for action, such as housing, and land management, for example. The Advisory Forums will be expected to take a broad view of progress with the Park Plan, albeit from a particular perspective. There is no perfect answer to the issue of overlaps in interest – in practice this is part and parcel of the complexity of managing a National Park, and the joining up and ensuring that overlapping mutual interests are brought to the attention of advisory Forums and Delivery teams will be the job of the new Strategic Planning and Policy officer, and transmitted to the Board through regular reports.



23. ...involve a considerable number ... will only be effective if the meetings are of high quality – well chaired, focused, and well

serviced. This will require time and resource input from the CNPA (see later section), and we are looking at training programmes to build our skill levels accordingly.

24. The distinction between delivery, objective advice, and strategic guidance is a logical one; whether in practice this meets everyone's needs remains to be seen – we will keep the arrangements under review, with partners. A number of other forums and groupings will continue to exist, for other reasons. The Local Outdoor Access Forum will continue in its current form as it meets our statutory obligation as the access authority, and will provide a useful additional source of access-related advice. The group *Inclusive Cairngorms* will likewise continue as the successor to the *All Abilities Network*.

Recommendation

25. **That the Board agree the arrangements for focusing the collective efforts of all partners on the delivery of the Plan (paragraphs 9 to 24), and enabling the CNPA to exercise its role of ensuring the collective and coordinated delivery of the Park's aims.**

Consultation

26. Consultation has been carried out with Management Team and CNPA staff, our partner organisations, the Macaulay Institute, the Visit Forum members and the Chairs of the ESD and ILM forums as well as various Board members.

Policy Context

27. The National Park Plan shows how its implementation can contribute to national policy objectives, as well as providing a framework for more local strategies and policies to be better integrated. The implementation mechanisms will also contribute towards the CNPA Corporate Plan Goal that plans, policies and actions are developed through transparent and robust processes that engage with stakeholders.

Delivering Sustainability

28. Sustainable Development is one of the guiding principles identified in the plan. The plan has been designed to work towards all four National Park aims collectively, to help deliver sustainability.

Delivering A Park for All

29. Social justice – A Park for All – is one of the guiding principles identified in the plan, which promotes a culture of inclusivity as well as specific actions throughout to improve inclusion. The implementation mechanisms also aim to provide opportunities for all interested parties to get involved with the management of the National Park Plan.

Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency

30. The National Park Plan is the key tool in promoting more joined-up government within the Park. Adding Value is one of the guiding principles identified in the plan, and the structure is designed to promote greater alignment in public sector effort and resources. One of the key responsibilities of the seven delivery teams is to focus on delivering economy, effectiveness and efficiency through the collective efforts of all the delivery partners.

Financial Implications

31. The National Park Plan does not set out operational detail or financial commitments for any of the partners, including the National Park Authority. It sets out the direction, and the five year outcomes towards which we collectively commit ourselves to working. Implementation now requires the relevant partners to agree detailed delivery plans and to take actions to deliver the agreed outcomes which will need to be reflected in each partner organisation's corporate/operational plan.
32. The National Park Authority, like other partners, will need to include the relevant actions for us to deliver within our own corporate and operational plans. The amount of resources available from 2008-11 will clearly be influenced by the forthcoming spending review, and our plans will be set out in the Corporate Plan prepared later this year. Implementation of the Authority's role in the first year of the National Park plan has already been detailed through preparation of the Authority's operational plan for 2007-08 which was approved by the Board on 23rd February 2007.
33. The implementation mechanisms proposed in this paper will have resource implications for the CNPA whose role is to lead and co-ordinate the collective delivery of the Park Plan - this will require considerable staff effort to service and support the seven delivery teams, three advisory forums, and the Strategy Group. If these groupings are to be effective it is essential that these are high quality meetings which are well communicated and make best use of available resources for all those involved.

Presentational Implications

34. This is a significant milestone for the National Park. It is important that we maintain the communication which has built up with stakeholders throughout this process and keep people informed as the plan is adopted and implemented.
35. Arrangements are in hand to distribute the Park Plan to Ministers and our partners and the complete set of documents is available via the CNPA website. These documents include:
 - a) National Park Plan
 - b) Consultation Report
 - c) Strategic Environmental Assessment Statement
 - d) State of the Park Report (published April 2006)
36. In addition, a 12-page summary of the plan which outlines how the plan will make a difference and benefit the Park will be sent to all residents and businesses within the Park boundary and will be available for use with members of the general public. A small aid memoir has also been produced which sets out the Park aims, strategic objectives and priorities for action and provides our delivery partners with contact details of the public sector partners who have endorsed the National Park Plan.

Implications for Stakeholders

37. The approval and formal adoption of the National Park Plan 2007 is a significant milestone for all stakeholders involved in the National Park. Having been shaped through extensive stakeholder engagement, implementation of the approved plan will continue to depend on the active engagement of stakeholders, in particular, those identified in the plan as partners responsible for delivering actions. Once the plan has been formally adopted by the CNPA Board, there will be a significant effort required amongst all partners to develop the most effective ways of working together to deliver and monitor the plan. The processes proposed will be carefully monitored so that any lessons learnt can be used to continually improve our way of working.

Next Steps

38. Subject to the Board agreeing the recommendations of this paper the next steps will be:
 - a) Establish the seven priority for action delivery teams and prepare and agree with our partners a draft delivery plan by September 2007
 - b) Confirm the proposed changes to the Advisory forums at the ESD Forum to be held on 25th May, Visit Forum to be held on 30th May and ILM Forum on 12th June and set up the 3 new advisory forums by the Autumn 2007
 - c) Arrange a Park Plan launch event in the Autumn involving the new Minister and the delivery team, advisory forum and strategy group members.

- d) Arrange a Strategy Group meeting early in 2008 to agree the content of the first National Park Plan Annual Report and discuss any strategic issues affecting the Park
- e) Prepare a National Park Plan Annual Report for year 1 during Q1 2008/09

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