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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## **BRIEFING PAPER**

**Title:** Briefing Paper on Item 8 of our Corporate Plan: Strategy and Communications to Deliver Our Role Effectively and Efficiently.

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### **Purpose**

To provide the board with a briefing on our approach to delivering priority 8 of our Corporate Plan: Strategy & Communications to deliver our role effectively & efficiently.

### **Executive Summary**

This paper is one of a series of background briefing papers to inform the Board, and in particular new Members, of the work of CNPA. This paper covers priority 8 of our Corporate Plan: Strategy & Communications to deliver our role effectively and efficiently.

This paper explains how our work contributes to the Scottish Government's national performance framework and sets out the strategic policy context through which we operate including the National Park Plan and CNPA's corporate plan. Our approach to communications and engagement is key to functioning as a successful enabling organisation with our key stakeholders. The paper highlights our approach to community engagement and support, an innovative approach through which we seek to make more effective connections into community planning.

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## **Briefing Paper on Item 8 of our Corporate Plan: Strategy and Communications to Deliver Our Role Effectively and Efficiently**

### **Background**

1. The CNPA's role is to lead and co-ordinate the collective delivery of the Cairngorms National Park Plan. Considerable effort is made to establish and manage implementation and communication mechanisms which encourage and support all our partners to get involved in the shaping and delivery of the Park Plan. We seek to add value by ensuring an integrated approach delivers best value from our collective resources, skills and expertise. These achievements will support a number of Scottish Government outcomes particularly:
  - a) We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need;
  - b) We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others;
  - c) We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people;
  - d) We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations;
  - e) We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity;
  - f) We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production; and
  - g) Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs.

### **Approach**

2. CNPA's enabling approach to delivery means that a significant part of our role is to bring together, support and facilitate effective structures and mechanisms to deliver the outcomes identified in the National Park Plan. To achieve these outcomes, we need to have strategic plans, policy frameworks, support and advice mechanisms in place. Also, we must build strong relationships with individuals and organisations to establish trust and a greater understanding of each other's motivations and objectives to gain active support for the work carried out across the Park through collaborative ways of working.
3. This is not just about working 'together', it is about building real partnerships in which CNPA is able to let go of appropriate areas of work where others are best placed to take the lead, for example the Cairngorms Business Partnership or Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership. In this way we seek to embed ownership of the Park amongst those responsible for day-to-day management. This has to be balanced by the overall leadership required of CNPA.

### **Strategy**

#### **National Policy Context**

4. The national policy context is a key determinant of how our partners, especially national NDPBs and parts of the Scottish Government, but also others, view

National Parks and therefore what they perceive their role to be in delivering the National Park Plan. Beyond the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 and the accompanying guidance and records of parliamentary debates at the time, there is no Scottish Government guidance on what National Parks in Scotland are expected to deliver or how they should be considered as designations within the wider policy context. During what could be called the 'establishment phase' of National Parks to date, this has at times resulted in a policy vacuum without clear reference points within national policy to guide decisions, particularly decisions of others in relation to their interactions with the National Park.

5. This is evident in the range of interpretations of the duty to 'have regard to' the National Park Plan. It has also been particularly evident in planning and development, where the status of the National Park designation has been interpreted in varied ways, for example in relation to landscape, and the status of the National Park Plan was initially unclear. To some extent, a body of casework over these years has helped to clarify these questions, but at times has resulted in inconsistent interpretations.
6. In particular, the Local Plan Inquiry held during 2009 provided greater clarity on the status of the National Park Plan in relation to planning and development – confirming that the National Park Plan sets out the strategic direction and context from which development planning should take its direction. The National Park Plan provides the rationale and justification for development policies and plans, especially where these may differ from standard approaches elsewhere.
7. Development of the next National Park Plans for both of Scotland's National Parks offers an opportunity to set out this wider policy context relating to the designation in plans that will have statutory weight. We are working with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority to develop a section setting out these key areas of policy context that will be common to both National Park Plans. We are also taking forward discussions with the Scottish Government to include greater explanation and guidance in relation to National Parks within future development of national planning policy.

#### **Scottish Government Outcomes**

8. The national performance framework provides a clear basis on which to demonstrate the contribution that the collective management of the National Park makes to the Scottish Government Outcomes. Although we don't use these outcomes as the structure for our National Park Plan, we have identified as set out above the outcomes to which delivery of the plan, and CNPA's own work towards it, makes a significant contribution.
9. These outcomes are the basis for Single Outcome Agreements which provide a common language and framework for community planning that should make it easier to show how the work of partners in the Park helps to deliver their own goals and contributes to the national outcomes. As such we expect to continue to use the national outcomes and the national performance framework to help engage partners in seeing the opportunity to deliver through National Parks.

### **National Park Plan**

10. The National Park Plan is the key strategic planning mechanism we have through which to set out a clear direction for the management of the Park and to co-ordinate the effort of a wide range of partners. Key points in relation to the National Park Plan include:
  - a) It is a statutory plan, required by legislation and approved by Scottish Ministers;
  - b) Preparation of the plan is one of the CNPA's few statutory duties;
  - c) The National Parks Scotland Act requires other public bodies to 'have regard' to the plan in exercising their functions in relation to the Park;
11. Our experience of developing and implementing the first National Park Plan has shown that it can be and has been an effective way to identify priorities and provide a common focus. That partners still refer to the plan four years after its approval indicates that it is fulfilling its function to a reasonable degree. However, there is a significant opportunity to develop and refine its effectiveness as we review and develop the second plan for 2012-17.
12. In particular, lessons for the next plan include:
  - a) The need for sharper targets and five year outcomes;
  - b) An opportunity to seek more explicit sign-up to the delivery of key outcomes by partners;
  - c) The need to provide more strategic direction for the Local Development Plan;
  - d) The opportunity to use the plan more explicitly to collaborate on more imaginative shared delivery given limited public finances.
13. Progress on National Park Plan delivery is communicated through a report to the board three times a year, and through an annual progress report that is distributed to partners and individuals.
14. Paper 4 sets out more detail on the development of the next National Park Plan, progress so far and its proposed structure.

### **Other Statutory Plans**

15. There are two other statutory plans for which CNPA is responsible:
  - a) Local Development Plan (Local Plan recently adopted, new Local Development Plan in preparation)
  - b) Core Paths Plan (review of which should be addressed through the Local Development Plan)
16. The Local Development Plan will replace the recently adopted Local Plan, setting out the strategy for built development in a way that is consistent with recent reform of the planning system. It will be a spatially focused plan, showing how development will be managed to help deliver the National Park Plan and the aims of the Park. Work on preparing the plan has started with a view to consulting on the Main Issues Report alongside the draft National Park Plan in 2011. Implementation of the core paths plan now form part of our ongoing work and its review is to be carried out through the Local Development Plan.

### **CNPA Corporate Plan**

17. Like all NDPBs, CNPA has a corporate plan which shows how we will direct our resources (staff and grant-in-aid from Scottish Government) in order to provide focus and accountability. In our case, the corporate plan nestles under the National Park Plan and shows how we play our part in delivering the National Park Plan. Our corporate plan needs to bring together our leadership and co-ordination role, with the specific elements of delivery to which we direct our own staff and financial resources. Our current corporate plan was extended, with some adjustment, to cover a fourth year 2011/12, in order to bring development of a new corporate plan in line with the next National Park Plan. This timing should also allow greater certainty on CNPA's likely financial settlements over the next three years. Progress on corporate plan delivery is reported to the board three times a year, alongside reports on the National Park Plan.

### **Climate Change**

18. Within our current corporate plan, climate change has been identified as a particular area of cross-cutting strategic policy (achievement 37). This is in part in recognition that the National Park Plan does not organise partners around a climate change theme explicitly, although many of the outcomes and actions are delivering action on climate change. The focus of CNPA's work on climate change has been to:
  - a) Co-ordinate information to help partners understand climate change in a National Park context and take appropriate action;
  - b) Encourage partners to use the National Park as an effective place to communicate the effects of climate change and the potential for mitigation and adaptation actions.
19. As the climate change agenda has developed, particularly following the Scottish Government's ambitious targets, Scottish Climate Change Act and recent Low Carbon Economic Strategy, work on climate change mitigation and adaptation looks likely to be a key element within the next National Park Plan.

### **Communications and Engagement**

20. The overall aim of our communications and engagement work is to keep relevant audiences informed and actively engaged in the work of the Cairngorms National Park to gain and retain their ongoing understanding and support for the aims of the Park and delivery of the National Park Plan. It also allows the CNPA to evaluate how it can best deliver through particular partnerships.
21. In order to co-ordinate the implementation and delivery of the Park aims, plans and policies a number of engagement mechanisms are used. Where possible we have built on existing mechanisms but in some cases we have created mechanisms which meet our needs and/or respond to the needs of others.
22. **The Cairngorms National Park Strategy Group** meets once a year bringing together the leaders of our public sector partners committed to delivering the National Park Plan as well as representatives from the private and voluntary sectors. The meetings are usually chaired by the Minister for the Environment and aim to agree, monitor and review the delivery of the National Park Plan and how this is contributing to the National agenda.

23. **Advisory Forums** meet 2 or 3 times a year and focus on longer term planning as well as providing a forum for discussion and advice in relation to any issues that may need to be addressed. The five advisory forums are: Local Outdoor Access Forum (LOAF) chaired by Paul Corrigan, Sustainable Tourism Forum chaired by Jaci Douglas, Land Management Forum chaired by Drew McFarlane-Slack, Cairngorms Deer Management Group (CDAG) chaired by Michael Hone and Inclusive Cairngorms chaired by Jim Brown.
24. **A variety of partnerships, working groups and delivery teams** meet as required and focus on delivery through partnership working. For example the Cairngorms Business Partnership, Brand Management Group, Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan, Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust, New Leader, Farmers Forum, Scotland's Environmental & Rural Services (SEARS) and Community Planning Partnerships. Some of these are led by the CNPA but most are led by others with CNPA representatives providing support, information and advice as required.
25. In addition, CNPA programme managers are responsible for keeping relevant partners informed of plans and progress made against the National Park Plan and when necessary will bring key partners together to ensure our collective efforts are effectively co-ordinated. Currently there are three delivery teams which are used for this purpose but this approach is flexible to meet the needs of each priority for action identified in the National Park Plan.
26. Finally, there are a number of **networks and affiliations** which bring groups of interest together to share ideas, promote best practice and where possible share skills and resources. These include the Cairngorms National Park rangers' network, the outdoor learning network, the Association of Cairngorms Communities (AoCC), the Cairngorms Campaign, the Association of National Park Authorities (ANPA) and the Europarc Federation various tourism partnerships and DMOs as well as collaborative initiatives such as the Cairngorms Farmers Market, Creative Cairngorms and Cairngorms Hostels.

## **Our Approach to Community Engagement and Support**

27. The CNPA recognises the vital role that communities play in delivering the aims of the 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. There are a variety of mechanisms through which the CNPA currently works, these having evolved over time. (see Board Paper I 05/09/08 and Board Paper I 20/03/09)

### **National Standards of Community Engagement**

28. Building a common approach to community engagement with our partners is key. To this end we aspire to the National Standards of Community Engagement (Annex I) that promote a community led approach. In addition we prepared a community action planning toolkit "Our Community ... A Way Forward" which has proved to be extremely successful.

### **Key Mechanisms for Community Engagement and Support**

29. It is important for the Board to recognise the complexity and variety of mechanisms for community engagement and support that currently exists. The following section outlines the various components that the CNPA are working with on a Park wide basis and at local authority level.

### **Community Planning Partnerships**

30. Community Planning is a nation-wide, statutory process, facilitated by Local Authorities, which helps public agencies to work together with the community (including communities of place and of common interest/identity) to plan and deliver better services which make a real difference to people's lives. There is an area of common interest between the National Park Plan and the Community Plans that cover parts of the Park.
31. The Scottish Government sees community planning as being the primary mechanism for community engagement and support. They have agreed, or are working towards having, Single Outcome Agreements for each Community Planning Partnership to ensure that their focus aligns with the National Performance Framework.
32. The CNPA recognises the pivotal importance of engaging in community planning processes as a means to delivering the National Park Plan within the context of the different Local Authority areas within the Park. The challenge for the National Park Authority is maintaining consistency of outcome with the five Local Authorities all with different interpretations in the design and delivery of community planning. Currently CNPA officers are looking at our engagement with the Community Planning Partnerships with an aspiration to streamline community plans with the National Park Plan and develop partnership delivery through these forums more effectively.

### **Community Action Planning and Support**

33. 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.
34. **Highland-** In 2008 a project was developed led by Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey (VABS) to ensure that all the communities in the Highland area of the Park created their own action plans (Our Community a Way Forward) based on the "tool kit". Following the pilots in Grantown-on-Spey, Dulnain Bridge, Cromdale and Advie, the "tool kit" provided an aid to identify emerging priorities in Laggan, Dalwhinnie, Newtonmore and Kingussie during 2009. The rest of the communities in the Highland will complete this process by 2011/12.

35. **Aberdeenshire** - In 2009 Ballater completed their community action plan, and have formed a community led steering group 'Ballater One Voice Our Future' (BOVOF) chaired by Gordon Riddler as a way of delivering the communities' priorities effectively. One of the main outcomes has been the development of a three year Development project that brings a dedicated officer, Nick Mardell to the Marr Area within the National Park.
36. **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.
37. **Angus** - Angus Council is piloting a new approach to localised community planning in Kirriemuir and the Glens and plans to roll out this approach across Angus. The CNPA is supportive of this approach.
38. **Perth and Kinross** - Work has started to make the links in Perth and Kinross and initial feedback from the Park Plan review in Blair Atholl, Killiecrankie and Glenshee has been very positive.

**Community Engagement for the National Park Plan and Local Development Plan**

39. On the back of the overall success of the Community Action Planning in Highland and Aberdeenshire, it was agreed to use this more community-led approach in developing the next National Park Plan and the Local Development Plan.
40. By joining up the engagement on both plans, and embedding them within the wider community engagement and development process, it should make engagement on both plans and with the CNPA more interesting, relevant, simpler and useful to communities. The emphasis is on developing solutions that are appropriate to each community's needs – whether that is through the National Park Plan, Local Development Plan, community planning partnership or the community's own action plan.
41. The CNPA contracted three voluntary/community sector organisations to carry out the work on our behalf and provide support to different communities. The organisations are: Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey (VABS) in Highland and Perth & Kinross by, the Marr Area Partnership (MAP) in Aberdeenshire and the Rural Environmental Action Project (REAP) in Moray and Angus. These bodies have close working relationships with the community planning partnership structures as well as having community representation on their Boards.
42. The first phase of engagement is complete. The point of the exercise was to help each community identify what makes their community unique and special, what threats and opportunities they face, and how they see their communities in the longer term. In some communities this built directly on the community action planning exercises that had been done in the recent past, in others more work was required.
43. The outputs from this phase are a series of statements and background information from each community (and 'signed off' by each community council) that try to set



out what makes them special and how they want to adapt to the future. The statements and background information will be used to help inform the development of the draft National Park Plan, the Local Development Plan Main Issues Report, and critically, can be used to further develop community action plans and as a focus for community planning partnerships. The community statements will be included in the draft National Park Plan and both the statements and supporting background information will be published on the CNPA website. The statements that have been signed off by each community so far are included in Annex 2 to this paper. We expect the outstanding statements to be signed off within January.

44. The second main phase of community engagement is focused around the consultation on the Draft National Park Plan and the Local Development Plan Main Issues Report through the summer and autumn of 2011. It will help communities get the most from the consultation processes and will provide advice and feedback on the different plans. Again, the links to community action planning and community planning partnerships will provide a strong element of continuity and a way of dealing with immediate issues and concerns.

#### ***The Association of Cairngorms Communities (AoCC)***

45. The AoCC has evolved from the Association of Cairngorms Community Councils and, prior to that, the Cairngorms Community Councils Group and operates on a Park-wide basis. Currently the group is chaired by Roger Clegg and meets every 3 months.
46. The AoCC's stated purpose is to promote and represent the shared interests of communities in and around the Cairngorms National Park for the benefit of the public by:
  - a) Providing a forum for sharing information, experience and networking;
  - b) Identifying shared issues and encouraging appropriate action;
  - c) Providing communication between the National Park Authority and other relevant organisations to support an exchange of views and information, allowing the National Park Authority to engage with communities and to meet all its statutory aims;
  - d) Providing appropriate support to the membership.

#### ***Cairngorms Local Action Group (LAG)***

47. Finally, the Cairngorms LAG is the broad partnership that supports community-based projects across the National Park (excluding Highland Perthshire which uses the Rural Tayside LAG). Subject to final confirmation of Convergence monies, the Cairngorms LAG are administering LEADER/Convergence grant support of £2.088 Million through to 2013. Additional CNPA and SNH funds have been pooled alongside this. The CNPA are represented on the LAG and host the LEADER staff. The LEADER Strategy and Business Plan has been framed in the context of the Park Plan and Community Plans and so the funds are hugely important in unlocking the potential of communities to deliver aspects of these plans. Community interests are well represented on the LAG. The AoCC has three representatives (including the Chair of the LAG Joyce Lyle) and all Community Planning Partnerships are represented.

## Our Approach to Communications

48. Our communications work follows four principles - openness, clarity, pro-activity, and responsiveness and our objective has been to develop our reputation as an 'enabling' organisation that is trusted and respected and that keeps people informed and involved in the work of the Park. To help prioritise our efforts we focus on four external target audiences – local communities; local businesses; land managers within the Park; and our public sector partners. In addition, we do a lot of work with national and local opinion formers including politicians, NGOs and the media.
49. The communication objectives are to:
- a) Demonstrate the value National Parks offer Scotland as a whole and how the CNPA and its partners help to achieve the Park aims;
  - b) Generate and maintain enthusiasm and support for the Cairngorms National Park both within and outwith the Park Boundary;
  - c) Encourage and assist key stakeholders to act as ambassadors and to communicate accurate and helpful information about the Park.
50. Further details of the Communications Strategy for the Park Authority including our communication mechanisms are presented in Board Paper 2 (11/07/08). Marketing, promotion and interpretation of the Park is largely led by the Cairngorms Business Partnership and through the delivery of the Awareness and Understanding priority for action in the National Park Plan led by Pete Crane (see Board Paper 5, 29/10/10).

## Role of the Board

51. Board Members play an essential role in helping to link up these various engagement mechanisms. Where appropriate Board members act as the CNPA representative, supported by a member of staff or briefing, where they can provide information about the work of the Park and Park Authority and report back to the Board on any issues raised. In addition, Board member attendance at forums and networking events helps to raise awareness of the Cairngorms National Park and to gain feedback and views from key influencers and other potentially interested parties. This approach is co-ordinated through the 'Forward Look' (see Annex 3) which is circulated to Board members on a regular basis and managed by the Convener, Chief Executive and Communications & Engagement Director.

## Key Staff Contacts

*Strategic Land Use Director* – Hamish Trench  
*Strategy Policy & Planning Officer* – Gavin Miles  
*Communications & Engagement Director* – Francoise van Buuren  
*Education & Inclusion Manager* – Claire Ross  
*Social Inclusion Policy Officer* – Elspeth Grant  
*Communications & Information Manager* – Stephanie Bungay  
*Press Officers (job share)* – Karen Archer & Clare Muckart  
*Communications Officer* – Alison Fleming  
*Assistant Communications Officer* – Sara Smith

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