CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: **Renewable Energy Developer Checklists and Update**

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Purpose:

To seek planning committees agreement of Checklists for hydro power and wind energy developments in the park, and to update the planning committee on wider work currently being undertaken on Renewable Energy.

Recommendations

That the planning committee:

- Agree the two new checklists for developers giving guidance on information that needs to be submitted with any planning applications for Hydro power and Wind energy developments in the Park;
- Note the research undertaken by SAC to inform future policy and activity relating to Renewable Energy generation in the Park; and
- Note the joint work being undertaken with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority on Renewable Energy.

Executive Summary

1. Renewable Energy developments continue to attract a lot of interest, and the need to ensure we continue to have a robust policy approach to renewable energy generation, and that we are providing developers with clarity about our approach and what we require from them are areas for focus at the present time.

2. In order to continue the development of our policy approach for the Local Development Plan, research has been undertaken looking at the potential for renewable energy developments in the National Park.

3. In advance of the Local Development Plan, we have also put together two checklists for developers, highlighting in one place the information that we require to be submitted along with any planning applications for hydro power or Wind energy developments in the Park.

4. Finally, as renewable energy remains a high priority for the Scottish Government, we are working closely with colleagues at Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority to ensure we have a clear and robust set of messages on renewable energy, and to harmonise our policy approaches as far as is appropriate, whilst recognising the specific differences that exist between the two National Parks.

Background

5. Making sustainable use of our natural resources is an aim for the National Parks in Scotland, and one area in which considerable effort is being focused, is in ensuring the opportunities that exist for the development of appropriate renewable energy technologies are encouraged by the CNPA.

6. The renewable energy agenda is high up the Government's, and developers, priority list, and as such, we are working to ensure we have a robust approach to renewable energy development in the Park in place.

7. In order to move our work on renewable energy forward, a number of streams of work are being pursued:
   - Research into options for renewable energy generation in the Park;
   - Policy development (through National Park Partnership Plan, and Local Plan / Local Development Plan);
   - Ongoing work to support existing renewable energy activities, particularly at this time, the production of checklists for developers, to set out clearly the information that needs to be submitted with any planning applications for hydro power or Wind energy development in the Park; and
   - Focus on joint work with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority looking at joint policy approaches, and key messages about how we communicate the role the National Park has to play in the delivery of renewable energy in Scotland and how we are doing our bit towards the Scottish Governments 2020 renewable energy targets.

Developer Checklists

8. In order to assist both developers, and planning officers, two checklists have been drawn up (see Appendix 1) that set out clearly the information that must be submitted with any planning application for wind energy or hydropower development in the Park. The checklists give guidance on requirements for different sizes of development, and provide a number of links to additional sources of useful information. They also highlight the links to other regulatory requirements for hydro and wind energy development outwith the planning system – for example the CAR licence process administered by SEPA.

9. The checklists do not set policy; they are just to be used as an 'aide memoire' for developers, so it is clear from the outset the type and level of information that should be submitted in order to help determine any applications for wind energy or hydro power developments in the Park.

10. Now complete, these checklists will be made available on our website, and to anyone enquiring about wind or hydro developments in the Park. Any feedback received on their contents in the next few months will be incorporated into the supplementary guidance on renewable energy being prepared as part of the forthcoming Local Development Plan.

Renewable Energy Options Appraisal

11. During 2011, SAC undertook research work for us, looking at an appraisal of the various options available for renewable energy generation in the Park. The study looked at both the opportunities that exist for energy generation, and also what activity would be required to bring forward further work to increase renewable energy generation in the Park.

12. The final report (see Appendix 2) sets out the findings in relation to 6 renewable energy technologies, Hydro, Wind, Solar thermal, Solar PV, Biomass, and Anaerobic Digestion. It did not address deep Geothermal energy, but research work on the potential for this in the Park has been undertaken independently at St Andrew's University.

13. The research work was based around our overall National Park policy approach to renewable energy generation, in so far as it concentrated on small and medium sized developments, and did not look at large scale opportunities for wind energy generation.

14. The study has provided us with good information about the current level of renewable energy generation in the park, and the real opportunities that exist for further generation in the future. The report offers a number of conclusions, and suggestions for additional work in the future, but it is clear that the main opportunities at the current time for further renewable energy developments in the Park are for hydro and biomass schemes.

15. The report also includes a series of technology specific annexes, which set out basic information on the various technologies, and these will be made available to the public via our website.

16. The research finding are feeding into our approach to renewable energy that will be set out in the forthcoming Local Development Plan, and are also providing useful pointers for wider discussions about additional work and resources required throughout the Park to encourage more appropriate renewable energy generation.

Joint work with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority

17. Significant progress has been made in developing a joint policy approach to renewable energy for both the Scottish National Parks. Staff from CNPA and LL&TNPA have been working together to develop a joint approach to renewable energy definitions (now agreed in the National Park Partnership Plans), and for the future, a joint approach to renewable energy through Local Development Plan policies and associated supplementary guidance.

18. The checklists appended to this paper are one example of where the two NPA's have worked together to look at agreeing a consistent set of information requirements.

19. Further work is being undertaken on mapping the hydro resource in the Cairngorms National Park, in order to ensure our planning policies, and detailed approach are based on the same baseline information as that being used in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs.

20. Obviously, the National Park's are very different, have different issues and opportunities, and have different policies on renewable energy in the current respective Local Plans, but there is a considerable amount of common ground. We are working together in order to ensure a robust and consistent approach to consideration of renewable energy proposals in both of Scotland's National Parks.

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