
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: Transport Update

Prepared by: John Thorne, Economic Development Officer

Purpose

To update the Board on CNPA activity to date, set this within the national context, and look forward to delivery within the National Park Plan.

Recommendation

The Board is asked to note our progress on transport issues and the intention to co-ordinate future activity via the National Park Plan Priority for Action “Providing High Quality Opportunities for Outdoor Access.”

Executive Summary

Accessible and efficient transport is vital as a driver for the Park, playing a key role in the economic and social sustainability of our communities and businesses. It plays an important function in retaining and attracting population to the area and servicing visitors.

Transport influences how people access and interact with the Park. The Cairngorms Transport Audit has identified key actions which will help deliver the Plan’s three transport-related strategic objectives, impacting on tourism, resource use, social inclusion, access, and awareness and understanding. It will also add to the contribution we have already made into local, regional and national policy.

Early actions have included the Heather Hopper, Cairngorms Explorer and the transport audit. Transport clearly cuts through many areas of the Park Plan, and it is important that we find the right level of involvement with partners, developing future actions through the National Park Plan (NPP) delivery process.

TRANSPORT UPDATE - FOR INFORMATION

Background

1. Access to, and use of, public transport varies across the Park and early actions have been put in place to start to address key issues. In 2006, CNPA led on the re-introduction, with Highland and Aberdeenshire Councils, of the 501 Heather Hopper bus service between Grantown-on-Spey and Ballater. Subject to tender, this is expected to be extended through to 2010.
2. In 2005 CNPA published, with financial support from HITRANS and NESTRANS, the Cairngorms Explorer. Repeated in 2006 and 2007, this provides comprehensive public transport information for the Park, with links to accessible cycling and walking routes.

Cairngorms Transport Audit

3. CNPA have completed, with financial support from Perth & Kinross Council, Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, a transport audit for the Park. The objectives were to review existing public transport provision and identify gaps, develop a partnership framework and to draw on good practice elsewhere. Over 850 residents and 500 visitors were interviewed, drawing out a series of suggested priorities and actions for the Park.
4. The main findings of the survey were:
 - a) There is high car ownership and use in the Park. Less than half all respondents travel to work; 8% of all respondents (and 16% of those who work) work at home, and most of those who do travel to work do so less than five days per week. Most (68%) go by car, and most respondents said there were no suitable bus or train services to take them to work. 24% of workers walk to work. Nevertheless, 40% of respondents use public transport at least occasionally. The main request made was for greater frequency of bus services.
 - b) Among public transport users, there was significant dissatisfaction with the cost and frequency of bus services. About one third were dissatisfied in each case, greater than the national average. There was particular dissatisfaction over cost among younger people (68% of under-24s).
 - c) There were requests for more services between Aviemore and Grantown-on-Spey, and Grantown and Elgin, as well as support for Demand Responsive Transport services. However, it was obvious that for many respondents the car is seen as the only realistic mode of transport for most purposes.
 - d) Only 13% of visitors came in by bus or train, and about the same proportion travelled by bus or train in the park (about the same number as those who cycled). There was again a strong feeling that the car is the most practical means of getting around, although many respondents felt it necessary to

justify this because of problems with luggage, elderly relatives, accessing remote locations etc.

- e) Awareness of public transport provision in the Park was fairly low, and visitors showed rather lower satisfaction levels than did residents – those who had actually used public transport were even more dissatisfied (41%).
 - f) Visitors' main requests were for more integration of public transport (mentioned by 36% of respondents), higher frequencies (32%), and better information (19%).
 - g) When asked what new services they would like to see provided, much the most popular request was for a service between Aviemore and Ballater / Braemar (i.e. the Heather Hopper), with requests also for Braemar to Linn of Dee and Aviemore – Grantown – the latter being the only request in common with the resident survey.
5. The recommendations from the audit were for:
- a) Cross-park services (Heather Hopper and Strathspey Stroller) to be continued and developed, hopefully with assistance from the Bus Route Development Grant scheme.
 - b) Improved services on the Aviemore – Grantown corridor.
 - c) Better information, including in particular a public transport map.
 - d) Fares and ticketing initiatives, aimed at introducing a Rover ticket and providing through rail-bus ticketing at Aviemore.
 - e) Promotion of more visitor-oriented packages combining transport with specific events or activities.
 - f) Improved links with lower Speyside.
 - g) Demand Responsive Transport.
6. The report highlighted the following 3 main recommendations for CNPA to:
- a) access better partnerships and funding opportunities
 - b) help fill gaps in public transport provision, especially where recreational need is not being met
 - c) co-ordinate the integration and packaging of ticketing and attractions
7. The full 94 page report is available online at the CNPA "Publications" web page or upon request.

Cairngorms National Park Policy Development

8. The transport audit will allow more detail to be developed from the 3 transport-related strategic objectives within the NPP, which are to:
- a) **Encourage and Support improvements to public transport quality and accessibility to better meet demand and increase use.**
 - b) **Encourage improvements to the transport infrastructure to support socio-economic development.**
 - c) **Ensure transport infrastructure is managed and developed in ways consistent with the special qualities of the Park.**

9. The National Park Plan Priority for Action "Providing High Quality Opportunities for Outdoor Access" and the "Outdoor Access Strategy" both contain detail of the actions that contribute to the above objectives: to address transport gaps, promote modal shift to, and integration of, cycling and walking, integration of ticketing, and better management of car parks. This in turn helps deliver on our cross-cutting themes to deliver Sustainability, a Park for All and delivering with economy, effectiveness and efficiency.

The National & Regional Policy Context

10. The National Transport Strategy was published on 5 December 2006 and sets out 3 strategic outcomes, to:
 - a) improve journey times and connections
 - b) reduce emissions
 - c) improve quality, accessibility and affordability
11. The Strategy recognises the key role the Regional Transport Strategies delivered by the Regional Transport Partnerships, Local Transport Strategies delivered by councils, and private business will play in delivering transport services and improvements. CNPA continues to feed into this strategy development process.
12. The Scottish Executive sees transport as impacting on policy areas as diverse as: connectivity to global markets, helping protect our environment from climate change, providing sustainable development, promoting social inclusion and social justice, and enabling economic development and supporting health improvement.
13. Regional transport objectives are set by the Regional Transport Partnerships. There are 3 covering the Park. Two have moved from voluntary to statutory roles: HITRANS (Badenoch & Strathspey and Moray parts of the Park) and NESTRANS (Aberdeenshire). A new creation, TACTRANS, covers the Angus Glens. Strategies must be published by April 2007, setting out the strategic issues, objectives for meeting regional needs, and option and action planning.
14. **The Board is asked to note our progress on transport issues and the intention to co-ordinate future activity via the National Park Plan Priority for Action "Providing High Quality Opportunities for Outdoor Access."**

John Thorne
February 2007

johnthorne@cairngorms.co.uk