

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

Prepared by: JANE HOPE, INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Purpose

To seek the Board's agreement to a policy on location of the CNPA's office accommodation.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- Agree in principle that the CNPA should have an office in more than one location in the Park;
- Agree that the headquarters should remain for the immediate term in the current offices in Grantown-on-Spey, and that an additional office should be sought on the east side of the Park;
- Agree that there are no current intentions that staff now located at Grantown-on-Spey should be required to move office, but that new recruitment should look to place staff on the east side of the Park, and that the new planning/development control team (recently advertised) should be located at the new office.

Executive Summary

The size and geography of the Cairngorms National Park mean that wherever the main office is located, there will be a need for one or more office(s) in other areas of the Park. This is partly because of the importance of ensuring that attitudes in the organisation do not become too influenced by the interests and culture of one part of the Park; but also because in delivering its development control/planning function, it will be essential that the CNPA is readily accessible to the public who wish to discuss planning matters.

The recruitment of a new planning/development control team from scratch is a good opportunity to staff the new office without requiring staff currently based in Grantown-on-Spey to move. Further new recruitment would also concentrate on staffing up the new office appropriately.

A certain amount of travel by staff and members throughout the Park will be inevitable, whatever the office arrangements, but considerable management effort must be directed towards putting working practices in place based on effective and efficient use of electronic and telecommunications.

OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

Discussion

1. While considerable debate is possible about the best location for the CNPA's main office, it would in practice be irrelevant - wherever the main office is located, there will be large swathes of this large Park which could claim to be too far away and therefore excluded from the underlying culture and thinking of organisation. In such a large Park, with the geographical challenge of an impenetrable mountain range in the centre, the issue is more about how many additional offices are set up, and where these are located.
2. The current offices in Grantown-on-Spey are leased, and include the next door buildings which provide considerable scope for expansion. They should therefore provide adequate accommodation over the medium term. In terms of efficiency, it would seem sensible to retain this accommodation (which includes a large boardroom which can accommodate meetings of 25 members).
3. In the interests of public access, especially to advice on planning and development control matters, it is suggested that an office is established on the east side of the Park. In the first instance, the new planning and development control team (which is currently being recruited) would be housed here, since there is no existing planning team, and no staff to relocate. There are no plans that staff currently located in Grantown-on-Spey would be required to move, and further recruitment over the coming months and years would focus on locating these staff in the new office, to build up a critical mass of staff there.
4. On development control/planning in particular, it is recognised that staff able to advise the public will need to be available routinely, regardless of where they are based. In practice, it may be that a rota will need to be established so that on certain days of the week a planner is available at a particular place in the Park.
5. Some travel will always be inevitable in carrying out day to day business in a Park this size, and indeed is one way of ensuring that individuals do not become too one-sided in their appreciation of the Park and its issues. Nevertheless, in the interests of efficiency, management of the organisation will need to give priority to establishing ways of working among staff that are based on effective use of electronic and tele-communications.

Jane Hope
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janehope@cairngorms.prestel.co.uk