
CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

Title: Managing for Visitors in Cairngorms Summer 2021

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Purpose: To update members on work with partners to promote and encourage safe, responsible & enjoyable access to the National Park post Covid

Managing for Visitors Summer 2021

Introduction

1. This information paper provides a summary of the continuing partnership work undertaken in the Cairngorms National Park to encourage visitors to have a safe and enjoyable experience in the summer of 2021.

Partner and Community Engagement

2. In spring 2020 CNPA set up two visitor working groups that continue to virtually meet regularly to discuss collective work and support:-
 - a. **Cairngorms Tourism Emergency Response Group** comprising CNPA, Cairngorms Business Partnership (CBP), Visit Aberdeenshire, Moray Speyside, Visit Scotland, Local Authorities, Highlands and Island Enterprise
 - b. **Managing for People Partners** a wide ranging group including public private and third sector land managers, LA's, tourism industry and Police Scotland
3. CBP and CNPA have hosted quarterly virtual meetings since May 2020 to update and engage with the following groups:-
 - a. Local Authority Councillors
 - b. Community Councillors
 - c. Residents

The most recent 'fifth round' of meetings were July 2021.
4. CNPA and CBP continue to attend **Scottish Government National Groups** including; Communications, Infrastructure, & Outdoor Access, and UK National Park visitor management group.

5. This engagement work continues to influence & support the activity summarised below.

Managing for Visitors Plans

6. Live plans for key rural areas of the National Park were produced in 2020 and again this year. These areas identify the key work that needs to be undertaken to encourage safe, responsible and enjoyable access to the Cairngorms. They are regularly discussed at partnership meetings. The current plans are on CNPA website [Managing for Visitors - Cairngorms National Park Authority](#)

Visitor Messaging

7. CBP with CNPA support developed in 2020 the **#CairngormsTogether** messaging that has four key positive requests:

- **Understand** the latest guidance
- **Plan** ahead
- **Adapt** to the situation
- **Be kind** to each other

8. This continues to be widely used to encourage visitors to safely enjoy the National Park and is now linked with the national call to **#RespectProtectEnjoy**.

9. Key areas that visitors needed to know were open are covered on CNPA and CBP websites

- a. Public Toilets
- b. Car Parks
- c. Visitor Attractions

10. Visitor information on what facilities are open has been further improved by CBP on the What's Open page [What's Open in the Cairngorms National Park \(visitcairngorms.com\)](#)

11. CBP are again developing videos promoting safe visits to the National Park in 2021, and CNPA has filmed 'Make it Yours' aimed at visitor facing staff. This presentation shares why the Cairngorms is a National Park, why it is a special place and what, based on visitor surveys, people are likely to want to see and do while visiting [Introducing the Cairngorms National Park – Make It Yours - YouTube](#)

12. During 2020 an increase in littering, human waste and irresponsible fires was observed and as the Access Authority CNPA has redesigned the **Tread Lightly in Cairngorms** campaign to focus on these issues. CNPA has offered Green Recovery Fund grant to six communities to support litter picks and will be promoting **Keep Scotland Beautiful Summer Clean**, May 28th - June 20th.

13. Six rural areas within the National Park were regularly over capacity in 2020 and again this year so CNPA continues to focus on promoting the communities around the

National Park, that remained relatively quiet, and the 666 miles of core paths, many of which are shown on 17 community path leaflets: the most popular visitor activities are sightseeing (61%) and going for a short walk (57%).

14. Anticipating an increase in **campervans** CNPA has supported CBP in promoting areas of the National Park where campervans are safe and welcome including waste disposal sites. Leaflets were widely circulated by the Family of Cairngorms Rangers. Web link here [Version-2-Campervan-Guide.pdf \(visitcairngorms.com\)](#)
15. Variable road signs funded by CNPA have been installed in Glenmore and at the access to Loch Muick with further signs rented by Aberdeenshire Council on A93. These provide up to date information on busy sites supported by social media updates.
16. CNPA, Forestry and Land Scotland and Highland Council funded Police Scotland to provide two staff to support the rangers in Glenmore on Friday and Saturday evenings during the school summer holiday. Their remit was, with the rangers, to encourage responsible access and enforce if only if required. This work was welcomed by residents and visitors.
17. CNPA staff have also continued to be interviewed by national media sharing the partnership work detailed in this paper, and the on the ground experience that the vast majority of visitors want to behave responsibly: to 'do the right thing'.

Ranger Services

18. Scottish Government funding has been secured by CNPA to continue the employment of 9 seasonal rangers from March to October 2021 along with a further five full time CNPA rangers appointed and in post from June. **Annex I** lists a summary of this year's current CNPA ranger activity.
19. CNPA has also secured funding to train and employ five Kickstart Youth Placement opportunities for rangers – offering a start in this type of career for young adults aged 18 – 24 on Universal Credit. Four are in post.
20. CNPA has increased its grant in aid to six partner ranger services (private estates or charitable trusts) by 10% in 2021 to further support partners in managing for visitors.
21. Forestry and Land Scotland, National Trust for Scotland, Nature Scotland and Balmoral Estate are all employing addition rangers/visitor staff this year. The National Park has twice as many rangers meeting visitors this year compared with 2019.
22. The Family of Cairngorms Rangers (13 partner services and CNPA) communicate and share experiences via mobile phone groups.

Visitor Infrastructure

23. Building on the work of last year CNPA has offered capital funding to six partner visitor infrastructure projects around the National Park this year including:
- Two upgrades to countryside attraction public toilets
 - Two campervan sites
 - Two countryside car parks
24. Funding is also in place for further road design and roadside parking at Glenmore with work scheduled for this autumn by Highland Council Roads Authority. This includes double yellow lines within the village.
25. Communities of Grantown on Spey and Kincaig are scoping path improvements to Speyside Way to improve local access for residents and visitors.
26. CNPA has secured funding from Visit Scotland Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund to scope additional capital project going forward for the next 3-5 years.

Discussion

27. The summer of 2021 has been busy with key rural hotspots overloaded during dry summer days. Littering, human waste, fires and dog behaviour continue to present issues for rangers to ‘deal with’ (see **Annex I**) including one serious six hectare forest fire in Glenmore. Nevertheless informed feedback from staff ‘on the ground’ has been that behaviour has been better than anticipated. This is summarised below in our feedback to Scottish Government:

Location	Visitor pressure (RAG rating)	Any incidents of note (Amber or Red rating only)	Action taken (Amber or Red rating only)
Cairngorms National Park	AMBER	Extremely busy particularly with overnight camping at key hotspots, day trippers and issues regarding parking. Camp fire and BBQ’s numbers below expected. Ranger patrols able to educate and engage positively with most folks.	<p>Overflow car parks utilised at Loch Muick and Linn of Dee with temporary road closures enacted when car parks are full.</p> <p>Joint patrolling by Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Scotland, stewards and countryside rangers in Glenmore.</p> <p>Significant pressure building around access to water for swimming and paddle boarding with parking issues and disturbance to wildlife. Local management measures in some places working.</p>

28. Further work on visitor infrastructure detailed above is required and a clearer, concise and more consistent approach to positive visitor messaging is required. CNPA will again be reviewing 'Tread lightly in Cairngorms'. Further work is required on promoting less busy areas of the National Park that want, and have capacity, for more visitors.

Cairngorms National Park Ranger Service Report Data 2021									
Week beginning	No. Patrols	No. of people engaged with	No. tents encountered	No. of overnighting campervans	No. of dogs on a lead (or under very close control) encountered	No. of dogs off the lead (or not under very close control) encountered	No. of live fires/BBQs extinguished	No. of old fire/BBQ remains cleared	No. of bags of litter collected (black bin bags to the nearest 0.25)
9th August	76	517	51	68	212	15	2	29	20.5
2nd August	68	577	41	71	206	26	2	39	20.75
26th July	83	730	108	75	248	23	3	45	35.5
19th July	71	772	300	93	199	22	9	27	27.25
12th July	65	970	319	82	262	42	17	34	24.75
5th July	69	536	48	43	185	45	2	37	21
28th June	58	621	115	62	183	28	8	35	17.25
21st June	43	536	82	64	104	11	5	22	9.75
14th June	47	356	30	67	116	15	3	53	15.25
7th June	52	537	169	112	155	26	16	39	18.25
31st May	52	522	92	81	124	15	20	59	15.5
24th May	42	341	54	33	142	20	10	5	19.5
17th May	43	233	32	19	90	7	1	19	14
10th May	40	357	50	54	89	18	11	14	10.5
3rd May	40	320	11	22	80	17	0	15	44.25