
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: CEO REPORT

Prepared by: Grant Moir, Chief Executive

Purpose

- I. To highlight to Board Members the main strategic areas of work that is being directed by Management Team. These are areas where significant staff resources are being directed to deliver with partners the aspirations of the National Park Partnership Plan.

Conservation:

- a) **Cairngorms Nature** – Two Cairngorms projects have made it to the shortlist for this year's Nature of Scotland Awards – peatland restoration (Innovation Award) and capercaillie framework (Species Champion Award).
- b) **Peatland Restoration** – To date 5 projects received funding from SNH's Peatland Action and were delivered resulting in the restoration of 376ha of peatland habitat which included 15.4ha of bare peat re-vegetated, 35.2km of eroded hags and gullies re-profiled and re-vegetated and 15.3km of drains or grips dammed. Estimated carbon savings of the projects (using the GEST Carbon Calculator from the Crichton Carbon Centre) is 4397 tonnes CO₂ equivalent *per year*. Four further projects have now received funding including Balmoral Estate, Glenshee Ski Centre (on Invercauld Estate), RSPB Abernethy and Candacraig Estate. This will see the restoration of 352ha that includes 11.7ha of bare peat re-vegetated, and 55.9km of eroded hags and gullies re-profiled and re-vegetated. Total carbon savings per year will be 6269 tCO₂eq/yr.
- c) **Moorland Partnership** – six estates (Mar, Mar Lodge, Invercauld, Balmoral, Glenavon and Glenlivet) are working together with CNPA to deliver a landscape scale approach to integrating moorland management objectives. The Group met again this summer and a work programme has been developed for the next 6 months.
- d) **Agri-Environment** – Staff met with Scottish Government staff to discuss how Cairngorms Nature priorities can be targeted through the agri-environment schemes that have been launched as part of the SRDP

Visitor Experience:

- a) **Active Cairngorms** – the Active Cairngorms strategy was launched by the Minister for Sport, Health Improvement and Mental Health, Jamie Hepburn MSP on 12th September. This also included the opening of the new section of the Speyside Way from Aviemore to Kincaig.

- b) **John Muir Award** – the 25,000th John Muir Award to be completed through the Cairngorms National Park was presented on 14th September by the Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, Dr Aileen McLeod.
- c) **Cairngorm and Glenmore** – the consultation on this strategy is now scheduled for the start of November.
- d) **The Mountains and the People (TMTP) project** - the TMTP project has started with the first mountain path works commissioned. The Authority has been supporting COAT in its recruitment of TMTP project staff over the summer with successful recruitment to the first two posts. The COAT Board has established a TMTP Steering Group on which the Authority is represented. The COAT Board's objective is to start the training element of the project before the end of March 2016.
- e) **Ranger Review** – staff have met with all ranger services over the summer and the Board has an informal discussion scheduled for 30th October.
- f) **Education Scotland** – £18,000 funding for CNPA now in place to support work with schools promoting activity among young female teenagers and Teaching in Nature support.

Rural Development:

- a) **Development Management** – pre-application discussions ongoing with Fife Arms Hotel at Braemar, Natural Retreats at Cairngorm Mountain, Ballater Station and in relation to Kingussie housing development. Ongoing work associated with the two Dalfaber planning appeals has been extremely time-consuming. Meetings at senior level with SSE on restoration of Beaully/Denny tracks have followed up on correspondence from Convenor.
- b) **Local Development Plan** – Supplementary Guidance and other guidance was submitted to Scottish Government and is due to be adopted by CNPA Board in September. Action Programme is being used as focus for discussion with the Developers Forum and others.
- c) **A9 dualling project** – The dualling work has now started on the five mile stretch from Kincaig to Dalraddy section of the A9. Staff are involved in a number of consultations on different sections of the A9 and these will be taken to the Planning Committee at the appropriate time over the next 6- 9 months. Two sections to come forwards to October Committee – Killiecrankie to Pitagowan and Pitagowan to Glen Garry.
- d) **Cairngorms Business Partnership** - Grants now offered for range of activities including business barometer survey, tourism Expo and delivery of the Cairngorms Economic Strategy
- e) **Community Action Plan** - work progressing well in Strathdon. Development of planning toolkit ongoing in Grantown as a pilot for Scottish Government to assist with town-centre regeneration.
- f) **Marketing campaign** - Approach now agreed with VisitScotland and Cairngorms Business Partnership for autumn and spring 2016 seasons.
- g) **Tomintoul and Glenlivet Development Trust:** Funding confirmed from key partners (including Moray Council and HIE) for extension of development officer post though to 2018.
- h) **LEADER** - 16 September saw the launch of Cairngorms LEADER (to which all members had been invited). The aim remains to have the first call for applications and funding round prior to the end of March 2016. Our understanding is that Cairngorms

LEADER may be one of the first in Scotland to make a grant award in this new programme. The LAG has two new members, bringing the total number to 13.

Stakeholder Engagement:

- a) Meetings at a senior level have been held with a range of organisations, such as, NHS Grampian, Aberdeenshire Council, CBP, Scottish Government etc.
- b) The CEO and Hamish Trench met with the new CEO, Simon Skinner and Chair, Moir Lockhead of National Trust for Scotland to discuss opportunities for joint work and approaches.
- c) The CEO and other staff met with landowners in the Park to discuss a range of issues including deer management, grouse management and the next NPPP.
- d) The 3rd meeting of the RAFE Delivery Board was on 23 September.
- e) The Convenor and CEO attended the Highland Community Planning Board and the CEO gave a presentation on the Cairngorm/Glenmore proposals.

Communications:

- a) The new Park website was launched on the 8th September with great feedback so far from partners and the public.
- b) There have been a number of events supported by Comms during the summer including the Royal Highland Show, Grantown 250 celebrations, Grantown Show and Cairngorms Nature Farm and Pride of the Park Awards, Braemar Gathering.
- c) CNPA's Corporate Plan 2015-2018 and the Annual Review 2014/15 have been published on our new website.
- d) Gaelic Language Progress report has been submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig.
- e) Correspondence announcing our new convenor and a quarterly e-newsletter have been sent to our key stakeholders.

Organisational Development:

- a) **Board Convenor** – Peter Argyle started on the 8th September as the new Park Board Convenor.
- b) **Corporate Plan** – the CNPA Corporate Plan has been agreed by Scottish Government and has been sent to partners.
- c) **Staffing** – Gavin Miles has been appointed Head of Planning with the CNPA.
- d) **LEADER and Cairngorms Trust** – The LEADER launch followed the Board's Finance and Delivery Committee approval of the Service Level Agreement between the Authority as Accountable Body for LEADER and Scottish Government as the Managing Authority. The LEADER team are working now on finalising processes and commenting on Scottish Government operational guidance. The application to establish a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) is with the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR) and we hope for a resolution to that process by the end of November.
- e) **Developing Culture** – the staff survey opens on 21 September for 4 weeks. The survey is undertaken every 2 years and is again being run through the "Best Places" survey process. Results will be collated in November / December and reported in the final quarter of 2015/16.

- f) **Finance and Audit** – 2014/15 accounts were approved by the Audit Committee and signed by the Accountable Officer on 28 August. These accounts have since been cleared by the Auditor General and are to be laid before Parliament at a date to be confirmed. The accounts received a clear audit certificate and highlighted a net expenditure position for the year of £124,000 as a result of phasing of income and expenditure on the Speyside Way extension project which spanned this and last financial year. We expect a compensating net income position in the 2015/16 accounts.
- g) **Developing Facilities** – Seafield Estate are progressing the planning application for the office extension project.
- h) **Developing Leadership and People** – a tender process is underway jointly with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs NPA to put in place a management development programme for mid-tier managers across both organisations, delivering against the Organisational Development Strategy objectives of improving consistency of management across the organisation and succession planning.
- i) **RAFE** – the Authority is fully involved in the Ministerially led Rural, Agriculture, Forestry and Environment group in its development of joint working initiatives across NDPB's and central government departments involved in these areas of work.

Upcoming Issues of Note:

- a) **CoHI Meeting** - 5th October in Elgin.
- b) **Tourism officers** from UK National Parks are having their two day meeting in the Cairngorms in early October.
- c) **UKNP Conference** – 14th to 16th October in Dartmoor
- d) **Cairngorms Research Seminar** – 21/22 October. Hamish Trench for details.
- e) **Europarc Conference** – 26 to 28 October
- f) **Scottish Rural Island and Housing Conference** – 30th October, CEO speaking at event.
- g) **CBP Annual Conference** – 4th November

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