
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 are 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** – the annual festival, held in May, comprised over 80 events across the Park with initial feedback indicating over 1000 people attended events. The Scenic Photo Post project was launched at the festival, putting in place a long term ‘citizen science’ approach to landscape monitoring. The UK wide Cairngorms Nature Young Presenter competition and the Cairngorms Nature Green Farm Award have been launched.
- b) **Capercaillie Framework** – implementation is underway with early work delivered on fence removal, people counters, communications planning, SRDP input and securing a joint PhD with Stirling University to support monitoring. The project team is drawing on expert input to develop the communications and engagement approach before further community engagement.
- c) **Peatland Restoration** – the first four restoration sites in the Park are largely complete. The Scottish Government announced further funds for 15/16 and we are now working with other land managers to submit further applications for work this year.
- d) **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, taking forward the approach agreed by the board in December 2014.
- e) **Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership** – the development phase work is on track including community engagement, project development, feasibility and audit work underway. As well as overall co-ordination and community support, CNPA is providing significant input to access, interpretation and conservation projects.

Visitor Experience:

- a) **The Mountains and the People Project** – Heritage Lottery Fund confirmed £3.28M funding towards a total £6.1M project across both of Scotland's National Parks. The project will deliver upland path restoration, skills development, volunteering and interpretation opportunities, with a total of £2.6M to be invested in the Cairngorms.
- b) **Active Cairngorms** – the public consultation was held and the strategy finalised, building significant support across the recreation, active travel and health sectors. See board paper.
- c) **Speyside Way** – the extension to Kincaig will be completed shortly and is due to be formally opened in the summer. Sustrans have committed further funds for project development of the remaining extension and improving the existing route.
- d) **Review of Ranger Support** – we have been engaging ranger service partners in reviewing current ranger service provision and future options, to inform further board discussions in late 2015.
- e) **Cairngorm and Glenmore** – through the partnership we are making good progress towards a long term strategy for these land holdings, now ready for public consultation starting in the summer.
- f) **Visitor Survey** – the Survey is now completed and we are anticipating a final report in July. We have also requested that the results are broken down into broad areas in the National Park: Angus, Deeside, Tomintoul and Glenlivet etc. It is vital that we are able to share this information with a wide range of partners so once we have the final report we will develop an easy-read infographic capturing the key points from the survey.

Rural Development:

- a) **Development Management** – applications approved recently for cheese retail premises on Deeside, holiday camping pods in Tomintoul and track-related developments in Strathspey. Windfarm developments around the Park continue to cause concern and CNPA has objected to two windfarm proposals in recent months and provided comment on one other. An appeal on two planning applications at Dalfaber, Aviemore is ongoing. Significant discussions are ongoing about proposed future developments in Aviemore, Grantown and Braemar.
- b) **Local Development Plan** – the new Local Development Plan for the Park has been adopted and Supplementary Guidance approved by the Board and submitted to Scottish Government. An Action Programme, focussing on delivery of development in the right place, has been approved by Committee. Training sessions have been undertaken with partner local authorities to ensure everyone is consistently using the policies in the new Plan. Work is under way on early stages of preparation of the next LDP.
- c) **A9 dualling project** – CNPA staff and partners have been working with Transport Scotland to finalise a 'Design Guide' for the entire route of the dualling project. The document provides a set of environmental principles by which the route will be constructed and will provide a guide for contractors. An Access Strategy is also under development and we are involved in the A9 Dualling Business and Community Forum

which is looking at issues and opportunities associated with the construction of the route. The next stage will involve contractors for each of the 12 projects developing specific route options, junctions, ancillary works, etc. on which we will be consulted.

- d) **Scottish Rural Parliament** – the Cairngorms Business Partnership, in conjunction with CNPA and Highland Council, have submitted an ‘Expression of Interest’ to host the Scottish Rural Parliament in Aviemore in Autumn 2016.
- e) **Tourism and Marketing** – CNPA staff are working with VisitScotland, the CBP, and the Cairngorms Tourism Partnership to develop a Cairngorms National Park regional marketing strategy. This document will identify the key opportunities, challenges, objectives, strategies, partners, activity plan, and core products for the CNP. This document will inform collaborative marketing activity in the area by VS, CNPA, CBP and others. Marketing campaign activity for autumn 2015 and spring 2016 is currently being developed.

Stakeholder Engagement:

- a) Meetings at a senior level have been held with a range of organisations, such as, Highlife Highland, RZSS, SNH, Ramblers Scotland, NHS Highland.
- b) The CEO has given evidence to the RACCE Committee on biodiversity strategy implementation. The CEO has also had meeting with constituency MSP’s Dennis Robertson and John Swinney.
- c) The first meeting of the RAFF Delivery Board met on 30 April Chaired by Richard Lochhead, Cabinet Secretary. The second meeting is on 23 June.
- d) National Parks UK AGM was held in the New Forest National Park on 8/9 June and was attended by the Convenor and CEO. As an interim step the CEO is also sitting on the board of the new National Park Partnership until a Scottish representative can be agreed. The CNPA has also welcomed visits from the National Parks UK Historic Environment Group last month.
- e) The CNPA has been asked to sit on the Highland CPP and has taken up this position with the Convenor attending the first Partnership meeting at the start of June.

Communications:

- a) Work on developing the new website for the Park is progressing well with the site expected to go live in July. The new site will be more customer focused, more mobile friendly and more interactive.
- b) CNPA will attend the Royal Highland Show as part of the RAFF partnership with the Minister attending on Friday 26 June. The CNPA will also attend the Grantown Show where the new Green Farm Awards will be presented alongside the 4 Pride of the Park Awards and the Braemar Gathering which celebrates its bicentenary. We are also supporting the Grantown 250 celebrations with an event entitled “*Historic planned towns now and in the future*”.
- c) Rural Affairs, Food and Environment (RAFF) communications group led by the Scottish Government’s Greener Communications Team are working together to ensure a more collaborative approach to our day to day communications work and to consider how we may jointly deliver a shared communications campaign.

Organisational Development:

- a) **Organisational Development Strategy** – an update to staff on the ODS is being prepared and will be circulated to staff and board at the end of June/start of July. The ODS work groups are currently considering future actions for the next phase of the ODS. The Staff Consultative Forum was very positive on the new staff appraisal system, developed and implemented within the Developing People stream of ODS. We have also identified a number of further improvements through consultation to finalise this new system in the coming year.
- b) **Corporate Plan** – the CNPA Corporate Plan has been submitted to Scottish Government for final approval.
- c) **Staffing** – Ed Swales was appointed to the Enforcement Officer post, and starts on 16th June, ensuring there is a hand over with the outgoing officer, Bruce Luffman. We are still considering the structure of the planning team, following the recent staff movements.
- d) **Facilities** – following the fire at the Ballater Station the VisitScotland VIC has been relocated to the NPA offices at Victoria Halls. This arrangement will be for 18 months to 2 years whilst the rebuilding work takes place at the station. The NP Hub office also now contains 3 staff from the Marr Area Partnership.

Upcoming Issues of Note:

- a) **Meeting with Aberdeenshire Council CEO** – a meeting is being held with Jim Savege at the start of July.
- b) **Review of Tourism structures in Aberdeenshire** – there is currently a review of tourism structures in Aberdeenshire that the CNPA is feeding into.

Grant Moir
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