

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DISCUSSION

**Title: HALF-YEARLY REVIEW OF PLANNED DELIVERY:
OVERVIEW OF ISSUES**

Prepared by: Management Team, and Operational Management Group

Purpose

To present an overview of the progress with delivery of the National park Partnership Plan, and the CNPA's role in this through our own Corporate Plan; and take stock of the implications for future work.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- a) Note progress with delivery (set out in papers 2 &3);
- b) Agree the Key Performance indicators for the Corporate Plan (paper 2);
- c) Consider any implications for the way we are deploying our resources (i.e. are our priorities right?) and any further action by CNPA staff or Board members, and our partners;
- d) Consider what issues warrant further and deeper discussion and forthcoming Board meetings (with partners where appropriate); and
- e) Consider whether this new format for presenting twice yearly reports to the Board is useful, and whether amendments are needed.

Executive Summary

This paper is one of a group of 4 setting out a half yearly report on delivery of the National Park Partnership Plan and our Corporate Plan. This paper (paper 1) draws on all 3 papers to flag up issues which the Board should be aware of because of implications for the future. The Board are asked to consider these, along with their own views on the strategic issue for the CNPA looking ahead, providing a steer for the CNPA's work.

HALF-YEARLY REVIEW OF PLANNED DELIVERY: OVERVIEW OF ISSUES - FOR DISCUSSION

Introduction

1. There are two strategic plans which guide our work:
 - a) **The Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan.** The current plan was recently approved by Scottish Ministers for 2012-2017. It is a statutory duty on the CNPA to prepare this plan: *“setting out its policy for managing the National Park...and coordinating the exercise of the CNPA’s functions... and the functions of other public bodies...with a view to accomplishing the purpose...[that the aims are collectively achieved in relation to the National Park a coordinated way]”*.
 - b) **The CNPA Corporate Plan.** This is our own 3 year plan of operation, showing how we will deploy our Grant in Aid. It follows from the above that our Corporate Plan will reflect how we, as one of the many partners, are contributing to the achievement of the NPPP, and that includes “hidden” elements such as coordination and monitoring, as well as the more obvious cases in which we are leading work.

2. Both Plans have recently been renewed. We have taken the opportunity to also renew how we provide the opportunity for the Board to consider progress with delivery, using a four-paper format. Papers 2 and 3 present information about delivery of the two Plans against milestones and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) along with some narrative about work in progress; paper 4 sets some context. This paper (paper 1) distils from these three an assessment of what appear to the staff management groups (Management Team and Operational Management Group) to be issues for further discussion on which the Board could usefully give a steer- additional issues may of course arise during the Board discussion.

3. The aim is to ensure the Board can:
 - a) Fulfil its role in overseeing the CNPA’s performance, policies, and its use of resources, and give a steer accordingly;
 - b) Consider if there are issues that warrant further and deeper discussion at forthcoming Board meetings (with partners where appropriate) i.e. set the agendas for future board meetings;
 - c) Take an overview of delivery of the NPPP and raise issues with partners or Ministers if appropriate;
 - d) Comment on the format for presenting twice yearly reports to the Board so that it is providing Members with what they need.

Background

4. **Accountability:** Clearly accountability for delivering the CNPA's corporate Plan rests solely with the CNPA. Delivery of the NPPP is not the sole responsibility of the CNPA, although it is clear that we are charged with leading its coordination which is part and parcel of its delivery. National Parks have a significant contribution to make to Scotland's economic and social well-being, and Scottish Ministers have taken a keen interest in both National Park Partnership Plans, and reports on progress. There will be an annual meeting of senior representatives of the partners to take stock of delivery (around September), and alongside this a twice yearly monitoring meeting of officers (April, September). In future, half-year reports to the CNPA Board will be informed by these monitoring meetings. Today's report to the Board is therefore only part of the framework of meetings to oversee progress with delivery of the NPPP.
5. **Assessing Performance and Delivery.** Plans have broadly two elements – what we want to achieve (the strategic outcomes) and how we will do that (the action plan). Measuring performance therefore consists of monitoring progress with completing the actions, and the much harder job of measuring the impact of those actions. There is an implicit link between the actions and the outcomes we are trying to achieve, but it is an imperfect one, not least because so many factors can impact on the outcome. So we develop proxy measures for the effects of actions on the outcomes, and those are our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
6. The National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) sets out ten strategic outcomes and for each of these a number of KPIs that over 5 years will show whether we are collectively making progress in delivering these outcomes (and so in turn contributing to the Scottish Government's 16 national Outcomes.) Alongside that, our own Corporate Plan sets out the work of the CNPA which contributes to delivering the NPPP. The Corporate Plan has its own set of KPIs to specifically measure the impact of the CNPA's work on the NPPP outcomes. A good example to illustrate this relationship is work on the Cairngorms Brand. It is not a specific programme in its own right in the NPPP, however it is a very important contribution to several of the NPPP programmes, and is an important strand of work in our Corporate Plan, as something the CNPA leads on.
7. This relationship is shown in Annex I. The important points that flow from this are:
 - a) Measuring performance is difficult; there is rarely a straightforward and unequivocal way of demonstrating cause and effect. It therefore depends on a mix of evidence (imperfect), judgement and intuition.
 - b) The complementary roles of staff and Board suggest that the staff concentrate on delivering the action plan (below the line in Annex I), and the

Board (while legitimately expecting reassurance that actions are progressing), should be concentrating on the judgements above the line. The 4 papers today aim to stimulate and assist that consideration.

Issues for Consideration

8. So early in the life of the NPPP and the Corporate Plan, there is little to raise by way of issues directly concerned with delivery. However, looking ahead, we can see some potential challenges. In many cases there is no clear question to be answered at this stage, but the issues are highlighted now on the basis of “no surprises”.

Corporate Plan – The Organisation

9. **Our “Enabling” Approach.** Our approach over 10 years has been to invest in the ability of others – businesses, communities and others - to deliver for the national park, and thereby encourage real collective ownership of the Park and its future. This has worked effectively with obvious examples such as COAT and CBP, both of which have been widely acknowledged as exemplars; other examples include Cairngorms Local Action Group (delivers LEADER grant), development trusts for Blair Atholl and for Glenlivet and Tomintoul, Community Coordinators (in association with community based organisations), and our unique approach to Ranger services. Cairngorms Nature is based on the same idea. In all these cases we get good leverage on our grant monies, we get leverage of effort and expertise which we could not find within our own small organisation, and importantly get significant buy-in to the aims of the National Park.
10. This approach will continue to be reflected in our work. It brings benefits as described, and means the CNPA can achieve much more with its small budget than a more conventional approach would do. There are several consequences. First, that the CNPA’s organisational profile is somewhat hidden. Second, we need to be sure that our governance and risk management arrangements have taken account of this way of working, in which we cede a degree of control – a piece of work on this latter point is in hand.
11. *To Consider: The Board needs to be comfortable with this approach and its consequences, as it will determine our Corporate Plan, and the challenges to Board Members in carrying out their role (particularly in communicating the role of the CNPA).*
12. **Measuring “delivery”.** Single measures/indicators cannot fully encapsulate the inherently complex matter of delivering outcomes. We therefore present information at various levels: performance indicators which can be measured only occasionally (and hence may not change from one report to another); milestone measures which show progress with action plans; and a narrative to explain current

state of play. Putting these reports together has highlighted the difficulty of measuring delivery in a simple but meaningful way that is cost effective.

13. *To consider: Is the Board content with the 4-paper approach to reporting on delivery; and specifically is the Board content with the proposed key performance indicators for the Corporate Plan? Are there other ways we could be reporting on our performance that would help the Board's assessment?*
14. **Managing the Organisation.** Oversight of finance, audit and staffing and recruitment (S&R) is delegated to the relevant committees. All these indicate the organisation in good "health". Of particular note at this stage is that our capacity is in effect limited to around 55 staff (full time equivalents) because of our policy of limiting this to a percentage of income, thereby ensuring a good proportion of our budget is always directed towards funding "projects" and delivery by others. At the moment that control target is being adhered to, but in the next 18 months could come under threat as Grant in Aid (GIA) levels fall.
15. *To Consider: No changes are proposed at the moment. But we will use these twice yearly delivery reports to re-assess our priorities as capacity of our organisation's staffing levels comes under pressure.*
16. **Capital expenditure.** We have been very fortunate to receive additional capital expenditure through the "shovel ready" money that the Scottish Government makes available, and to date we have been fleet of foot in deploying this to benefit the Park. With the Finance Committee we have put in place arrangements for managing and planning for future decisions on this. There are several consequences to note: first because of its unpredictability, shovel ready money may cause temporary changes to our work priorities. Secondly, this investment by the Scottish Government is on the basis that it helps the economy so we have to be clear about measuring these effects. Thirdly, in making capital investment, we have to be very aware of any future revenue consequences (i.e. maintenance).
17. *To Consider: (a)How do we best measure the economic benefit of projects? (b)Since its creation, the CNPA has tended to have a very small capital budget. Very recently we have had the opportunity to make significant capital investment. Do we wish to have a more strategic discussion about the sorts of "big ideas" that would drive capital investment in the long term?*

Corporate Plan – Delivery

18. **The Speyside Way extension project.** This is one the largest projects we are leading – it is likely to require the order of £1.5m, and is likely to take some time to deliver. It remains a real challenge for the future. *To note.*

19. **Windfarms/Renewables** – The common policy position for both of Scotland’s NPs (i.e. no windfarms but support for appropriate scale generation) is established and acknowledged by Scottish Government. Wind farm applications around the edge of the NP continue to take up significant resources and point to the lack of national policy or guidance on considering the effects of development on the setting of the Parks. Inquiries so far have not considered the impacts on the Park significant and we need to review our approach to handling these and the case that we make. We are currently holding discussions with SNH as our partner in relation to the most effective division of roles in assessing and voicing the impacts on the National Park as a national designation, and with the Scottish Government on the opportunity presented by a review of Scottish Planning Policy guidance to provide greater clarity on the national policy context of National Parks. *To note.*

20. **Raising Profile of the Cairngorms National Park.** Our Communications and Engagement strategy recognises a change in our approach after 10 years, of increasingly getting others engaged with, and raising the profile of, the National Park. We have two big opportunities coming up in 2013 – the Year of Natural Scotland (YONS), and the 10th Anniversary of the formation of the Cairngorms National Park. The real challenge is using both these, and especially YONS, to develop a recognition among public sector partners in particular of the value of National Parks to Scotland’s environment, economy and society, and then to be proactive in using National Parks to promote what they are delivering.

21. *To consider: Both represent a major opportunity and to capitalise on them will require us to devote sufficient resources, so there will be decisions for the Board to make on what priority to give these events, and how much time and funding to apply. This will be covered in a further paper to the Board shortly.*

The National Park Partnership Plan

22. **Fragile Economy.** Business confidence is low, and the economic outlook for the country as a whole remains poor. The economy of the Cairngorms is very dependent on tourism. There are some signs that tourism in this area is not as badly hit as the rest of the Highlands. It remains important that supporting business remains a priority, and that helping to build a strong business partnership to market the area as a tourism destination makes sense.

23. *To consider: Against this background, the Economic Forum is important – slow progress in setting it up is therefore of some concern.*

24. **Tourism.** Scotland’s tourism sector continues to suffer from a fragmented approach across private (over 200 DMO organisations, and many local tourism associations) and public sector (HIE, SE, VS, NPAs, SNH, FCS). In the CNP we benefit from a

well supported Destination Management Organisation (the CBP) which has a significant critical mass, and is being recognised widely as an exemplar. This is at least in part due to CNPA using it as a delivery arm, and the arguments for continuing this are sound. It is also clear from various research (see paper 4) that the Cairngorms National Park has great potential to attract visitors (and has already made significant progress). The public sector remains less joined up across the Cairngorms than is ideal, and LL&TT is a similar position – some progress is being made. The new tourism strategy for Scotland, published recently by the private sector led body the Scottish Tourism Alliance offers a real opportunity for us. It stresses the need for authentic experiences, better collaboration, and acknowledges the CBP as an exemplar.

25. *To Consider: We continue to develop our drive with partners for a better integrated approach, and a further paper to the Board would be useful to cover this subject in full, which is complex, crowded, and yet extremely important for the economy.*
26. **Broadband.** The roll-out of broadband is a vital line of work in the NPPP. Much of it is beyond the CNPA's capacity. However, we are currently working with The Scottish Government, HIE and Local Authorities to support improvements in Broadband Connectivity in the National Park. The current Scotland wide procurement exercises will deliver some improvement in the Park but is unlikely to deliver the level of improvement required for many of our residents and businesses. We are currently working to influence the programmes of work linked to the procurement to obtain the best possible improvement in service for our residents and businesses. In some areas it is likely that little improvement will be made and it will be up to community groups to obtain funding and deliver these improvements for themselves. The key role of CNPA will be to bring together key partners to ensure support for these communities, many of which are at the geographic extremities of our partner's areas. Our role is also to build capacity in the communities to help them deliver long-term and sustainable solutions. Some of these solutions have the potential to create jobs locally and will ensure that the CNP is an attractive place to live and to do business.
27. *To consider: This is a complex issue – a fuller board paper is proposed shortly.*
28. **SRDP (Scottish Rural Development Programme) and LEADER.** Both these programmes are currently coming to an end (2013). We are actively engaged with Scottish Government to ensure National Parks are recognised – in the case of LEADER that we retain our LAG, and in the case of SRDP that both NPs are seen as areas in their own right around which some of the priorities should be defined. Our current LEADER programme brought in around £2m over 4 years – it is significant for the National Park.

29. *To consider: To note the more immediate concern that there will be a hiatus in funding during 2014 between the old and new schemes.*

Summary of Issues coming back to the Board in 2013

30. Drawing on papers 1,2,3 and 4, the following papers are to be brought back to the Board over the coming 6 months:
- a) Brand development (and CNPA logo) (early 2013);
 - b) Communications strategy – nailing the priorities (early 2013);
 - c) Capitalising on Year of Natural Scotland and CNP 10th anniversary (Dec 2012);
 - d) Future of the Land Based Training Project;
 - e) Local Development Plan: approval of draft for consultation (Feb 2013);
 - f) Further work on inspiring design;
 - g) Low Carbon Cairngorms – delivering in practice;
 - h) Broadband;
 - i) Tourism.

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