
CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

Title: Update and forward look March 2007

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Purpose

To provide an update on the main areas of work undertaken by CNPA staff since the last Forum meeting (work which does not otherwise appear on the agenda) and plans for the months ahead. The report is structured in three parts (looking back, looking forwards and planning for next LOAF meeting) and also uses headings from the Outdoor Access Strategy.

Recommendations

The Forum is asked to note the work undertaken since the last meeting and the main areas of work anticipated over the next few months. Questions, comments and suggestions are all welcome.

Update on main areas of work undertaken since last Forum meeting

1. IMPROVING PATH PROVISION AND QUALITY

A Trust for the Cairngorms National Park

- 1.1 Further development work has been undertaken on a Park-wide Trust which could take forward many matters associated with management of outdoor access and visitor experience. A meeting with potential partners is scheduled for 19 March. There has been very positive correspondence with Upper Deeside Access Trust about potential transition arrangements. A paper will be going to the CNPA Board in April on this topic.

Community Investment Programme

- 1.2 The new grants scheme “The Community Investment Programme” will be launched in early April. Like the Integrated Grant Programme, it will offer financial support to community groups under a variety of headings including outdoor access

2. PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE OUTDOOR ACCESS AND MANAGEMENT

- a) CNPA commissioned and took delivery of 500 temporary standardised land management signs for use of land managers throughout the Park
- b) Outdoor access staff presented on the topic of “low ground outdoor access” at the Scottish Countryside Rangers Annual conference at Balmoral
- c) Outdoor access staff presented at Fisheries Management Course on the subject of “Recreation and Access on the Spey”
- d) Developing response to SNH on proposed restrictions to access at an environmentally sensitive site

3. PROMOTING VISITOR INFORMATION ABOUT OUTDOOR ACCESS OPPORTUNITIES

Interpretation in the Cairngorms

- 3.1 CNPA invited a wide range of partners to a meeting in early February to look at ways in which interpretation can be better coordinated, and how we can collectively take forward actions identified in the National Park Plan. It was agreed that guidance should be produced to describe the distinctive characteristics of the National Park which will help people recognise how they are part of it and inspire them to tell its stories.

Panoramic maps

- 3.2 Sketches and samples of the first of five different panoramic maps, the view from the East, have been received. The finished map is expected in June '07, with subsequent maps following at two monthly intervals.

Ranger Services

- 3.3 At its meeting in March the CNPA Board approved the next stage in the work toward developing a more co-ordinated approach to rangers in the National Park. This included approving:
- a) Detailed negotiations with Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) to transfer the discretionary grant for rangers, and the administrative costs, to CNPA.
 - b) Discussions with Local Authorities to develop ways of working that allowed CNPA more day to day influence over rangers work programmes particularly in relation to work on outdoor access.
 - c) Progress the development of a visual image, using the National Park Brand, that clearly links Ranger Services to the National Park.
- 3.4 Any changes to the management and grant aid of rangers will require the approval of SNH, ranger services managers and CNPA Board. We anticipate that significant changes will take 12-18 months to implement.

Point of Entry Marker Project

- 3.5 The four granite markers for the trunk road sites are currently being manufactured by Fyfe Glenrock at Oldmeldrum. Ian White Associates Landscape Architects are preparing detailed designs for the installation sites and their immediate surrounds. We have not yet appointed an installation contractor but anticipate that installation will start in May/June.

Review of visitor information

- 3.6 In conjunction with the ViSIT Forum, a small review of the visitor information about the National Park is under way. This focuses on the information available in print form. Any feedback about the quality, content or distribution arrangements for visitor information would be welcome.

4. PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT FOR ENJOYMENT OF THE PARK

The Heather Hopper

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Heather Hopper bus service will run again this year. It will increase from 13 to 20 weeks duration between early May and end of September and the buses will run twice a day on 7 days a week leaving from Ballater and Grantown on Spey. The buses will not be DDA compliant and are unlikely to be able to take cycles.

The Transport Audit

- 4.2 The transport audit surveyed over 850 residents and 500 visitors to review existing provision, examine best practice elsewhere, look at how to develop partnerships and funding, and to draw up possible future actions.
- 4.3 It recommended that cross-Park public transport services are continued (the Heather Hopper); improved services between Aviemore and Grantown; better information for travellers; through, integrated and packaged ticketing; more demand-responsive services and increased cycle provision on public transport. The CNPA will be taking actions forward through the National Park Plan delivery groups from 2007.

5. PROMOTING HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

Health Audit

- 5.1 Park Authority staff are currently reviewing the draft report and the final report is due in late March. The audit looked at the existing health walks schemes in and around the Cairngorms and the gaps in provision, and suggests other ways that health walks can be delivered.

Health Walks Schemes

- 5.2 CNPA through the grants scheme have funded Step it Highland to do further development work in Badenoch and Strathspey. The purpose is to revitalise 'old' health walks schemes in communities and start new schemes in others. This involves recruiting walk leaders, volunteers and participants and encouraging active referrals from medical practices.

6. MISCELLANEOUS

Outdoor Access Strategy

- 6.1 The National Park Board approved the first-ever Park wide Outdoor Access Strategy on Friday 2 March 2007. The strategy will provide a more consistent and coordinated approach to the delivery and management of outdoor access throughout the Park and will mean a wider range of people will be able to enjoy the Park. Its policies and priorities will provide better provision, variety and quality of outdoor access. The only issue of note is that, under the OAS Policy 7, the Board asked that the specific reference to higher ground be deleted

Recruitment to the Cairngorms LOAF

- 6.2 Following a review of membership, David MacKay and Ken MacMillan have relinquished their places on the Forum leaving two places to be filled – one for land

manager interests; the other for community interests. All other members expressed an interest in remaining on the Forum for another 1 or 2 years.

- 6.3 Adverts were placed in the Park wide local press for two weeks running and the advert was circulated to a large database of land managers and community interests including the Fishery Boards, the Land Based Business Training project; private forestry interests; the Association of Community Councils and the All-Abilities Communication Group.
- 6.4 At the closing date some 16 applications have been received. Appointments will be made by the Park Authority, and Dick Balharry as Chair of the Forum, and Nonie Coulthard as the Board-Forum link have been invited to be involved in the selection process. It is hoped that new Forum members will be in place by the end of April 2007.

National Access Forum

- 6.5 There will be the annual meeting of the National Access Forum and Local Access Forum on 31 October 2007. Two places will be available for Cairngorms LOAF members.

John Muir Award

- 6.6 Partnership funding from Scottish Natural Heritage and Leader + for this project ends in October 2007. We will be presenting a paper to the CNPA board in April that outlines options for continuing the delivery of the Award in the Cairngorms. Delivery of the Award is an action in the draft National Park Plan (*Extend the use of the John Muir Award to encourage more people to experience a sense of wildness in the Park and to share their experiences*) and by undertaking the Award young people can also directly contribute to other actions in the Plan. We are also looking at ways of linking the award to a Junior Ranger scheme based on a Europarc model where young people can act as ambassadors for the National Park.

Forward look to main areas of work anticipated before next Forum meeting (21 August 2007)

- a) Next round of CPP consultation
- b) Printing and distribution of OAS
- c) Continuing to plan and monitor the CPP consultation in line with Community Engagement Standards
- d) Developing comprehensive Cairngorms paths records or rights of way, promoted routes and eventually core paths
- e) Finalising path agreement for Glenmore Off Road route and applying for planning permission
- f) Stakeholder seminar to look at developing guidance for organised outdoor access events

Items proposed for next meeting of the Forum (to be confirmed with Convener/Vice-Convener)

- a) Planning for annual gathering in October

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