
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) **Ministerial Meeting - Moorland Management** – Aileen Macleod on the 19 January convened a meeting in Ballater to discuss moorland management and raptor persecution in the eastern Cairngorms. A number of estates attended and a desire to take forward a collaborative partnership to deliver change on the ground was agreed. CNPA also attended SNH's Scientific Advisory Committee's review of sustainable moorland management.
- b) **Capercaillie Framework** – Forestry Commission Scotland has confirmed that the target areas for pinewood expansion identified in phase 1 of the Capercaillie Framework will be eligible for additional points and a 10% premium payment for woodland creation options in SRDP. In the meantime the project team are progressing the project plan for phase 2 implementation.
- c) **Biodiversity 2020 Delivery Agreement** – We have submitted a draft agreement to the 2020 Delivery group showing the National Park's contribution to the 2020 Biodiversity Challenge including headlines on woodland expansion, peatland restoration, moorland management and catchment management.
- d) **River Spey** – CNPA continues to work with senior officers in SNH and SEPA to co-ordinate further analysis and action to address conservation issues on the River Spey, including the recently confirmed significant loss in the freshwater pearl mussel population.
- e) **Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership** – The development phase is underway with development officer Marion McDonald now in post and a well attended community meeting in February to promote opportunities to get involved.

Visitor Experience:

- a) **Speyside Way** – Further sections of the Speyside Way which will complete the route between Aviemore and Kincaig are now in construction and due to be completed by Easter.
- b) **Cairngorm and Glenmore Partnership** – we continue to progress collaboration with partners on a new strategy – see board paper for progress update.
- c) **Active Cairngorms** – During the current consultation period we are engaging with key partners including the health sector to identify opportunities for collaboration.

- d) **Outdoor Learning** – Development of a funding bid with Education Scotland for a General Teaching Council approved Teaching in Nature training programme.
- e) **Visitor Facilities** – New and refurbished facilities at Laggan and Nethy Bridge (delivered with ‘shovel-ready’ funding) are well advanced and scheduled to be open for Easter.
- f) **Support to COAT** – our corporate staff have invested a significant amount of time over the last quarter assisting COAT with their financial and business planning processes at this difficult organisational time between significant projects, focusing in particular on cash flow management. We have also been assisting in tying up collective government financial support to The Mountains and The People project.

Rural Development:

- a) **Cairngorms Tourism Partnership** – The second meeting of the CTP took place on 25 February. This included discussions on A9, Scenic Routes and World Host training
- b) **Development Management** – The CNPA have dealt with the last of the remaining legacy cases including Dalfaber and Carrbridge.
- c) **Local Development Plan** – The LDP was considered by Scottish Ministers who directed that it may be adopted, subject to a modification to the housing allocation at Carrbridge
- d) **A9 dualling project** – Planning for the road improvements has continued with CNPA feeding into the Environmental Liaison Group, consideration being given to the junction options at Dalwhinnie and the potential tourism benefits discussed with the Cairngorms Tourism Partnership.
- e) **LEADER** – our LEADER staff have been assisting the Scottish Government team in development of the national programme over the last few months, in addition to finalising the Cairngorms LEADER Local Action Groups (LAG) own strategy and plans and closing down the previous programme. Nationally, we are assisting with Co-operational proposals; technical guidance; central IT system development and development of the Service Level Agreement with Accountable Bodies. Good progress is being made in recruiting members of the new LAG.

Stakeholder Engagement:

- a) Meetings at a senior level have been held with a range of organisations, such as, House of Bruar, Tesco, Macdonalds Hotels, RSPB, NTS, JMT, SWT, SE LINK, Transport Scotland, THC, SNH, SEPA, FCS and others.
- b) The CEO has had meetings with the new CEO’s at LLTTNPA, SNH and the new Director of Environment and Forestry at SG.
- c) MT have been engaging in the development of the new Rural Affairs, Food and Environment Delivery Board
- d) The CNPA continue through Convenor and CEO to engage in UK ANPA.

Communications:

- a) **SE LINK Reception** – Scottish Environment Week reception at Holyrood sponsored by both National Parks celebrated its 10th Anniversary with Colin Prior as guest speaker, over 100 guests and 14 MSPs including the Environment Minister and Shadow CabSec for Rural Affairs.

- b) **MSP Survey** – a survey carried out in December shows a third of MSPs are reasonably familiar with the CNPA, over half of MSPs have favourable views of the organisation and over a third would speak highly of the organisation unprompted.
- c) **Cairngorms Nature Festival** – the Cairngorms Nature Festival takes place on 16 and 17 May. Information points at Ballater, Braemar, Tomintoul, Aviemore and Blair Athol will promote events held across the Park focusing on family fun, nature lovers, getting involved through volunteering and Food and Drink.
- d) **Make it Yours Campaign** – support materials and presentations with visitor facing staff and partner organisations aims to encourage them to promote the Park and what makes it special and to become 'Park Champions'.
- e) **Digital Communications** – a new website is being developed to improve the overall visitor experience and inspire people to engage in the work of the Park. It will be accessible via mobile devices and is expected to go live in June.

Organisational Development:

- a) **Organisational Development Strategy** – The organisation is developing a new Appraisal system for staff which is now ready for launch following staff consultation and review by the relevant Organisational Development project team. We have also developed an ICT strategy and a draft 5 year rolling investment plan for ICT infrastructure, hardware and software.
- b) **Staffing** – The NPA have recently recruited an apprentice receptionist as well as the Tomintoul/Glenlivet project officer. Two planning staff recruited earlier in the year take up post in March and early April.
- c) **Facilities** – The Cabinet Secretary, Mr Swinney, signed off the business case and confirmed approval to the project on 3 March 2017 for the proposed extension to the Granttown office. We have also progressed the National Park Ballater Office Hub project. Marr Area Partnership will be the first external users of the office hub, due to take up use of the office in the second half of March 2015, with RSPB also expressing a keen interest to use this office facility in the near future.
- d) **Health and Safety** – we have invested a great deal of staff time reviewing and where necessary overhauling our health and safety policies and procedures in the last 6 months of the year.

Upcoming Issues of Note:

- a) **Joint MT Meeting** – A joint MT meeting with Aberdeenshire Council has been agreed and a diary slot is being sought in the next couple of months
- b) **Year-end** – initial work has commenced with Audit Scotland on the year end closure and we expect to finalise accounts by end of April for external audit over the first week of May 2015.
- c) **LEADER LAG** – we hope to support to achieve a June 2015 opening of the new programme, depending on national progress.
- d) **Lottery Funding** – final decision on COAT The Mountains and The People Project expected in May 2015.
- e) **Pre-Election period** – The pre-election period for the UK General Election lasts from 30 March to 7 May 2015

Grant Moir
March 2015