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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## FOR INFORMATION

**Title: CAIRNGORMS RESEARCH STRATEGY – PROGRESS REPORT**

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### **Purpose**

To update members on progress in delivering the Cairngorms National Park Research Strategy.

### **Strategic Context**

1. A year ago in March 2014 members approved the [Cairngorms National Park Research Strategy](#) ('A Learning Landscape'). This paper provides a brief summary of progress in delivering the strategy one year on.
2. The purpose of the strategy is 'to establish the Cairngorms National Park as a learning landscape, providing outstanding opportunities for collaborative research across disciplines that directly influences management in the National Park and wider agendas in Scotland and internationally.'
3. The strategy sets out both the approach to collaboration we encourage and our research priorities in the National Park, research that directly informs our management challenges. Annex I provides a summary of progress against the current research priorities.

### **Progress**

#### **Developing Collaboration**

4. Napier University and Dundee University have both become formal signatories of the MoU for the Cairngorms LTSER (Long Term Socio-Ecological Research Platform). These join the existing partners which are James Hutton Institute, Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, UHI, SNH and CNPA.
5. In addition, we have engaged directly with the Universities of Stirling, Edinburgh and Aberdeen to identify research opportunities and promote relevant research topics for students. Some new collaborations have resulted, for example a collaborative PhD re capercaillie and recreation with the University of Stirling has received funding approval and will help deliver the Capercaillie Framework.

### **MSc Student Projects**

6. Following engagement with Universities we will develop in 2015 a list of relevant topics suitable for MSc students, for circulation to Universities in the autumn. This will help address research priorities that need short-term data collation.

### **Scottish Government Liaison**

7. We have met with the Government's Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services unit to discuss the opportunities to help address national research priorities in the Rural Affairs, Food and Environment (RAFE) Research Strategy 2016-21. As a result CNPA is now connected into workstreams developing evidence plans for integrated land use, catchment management and community development. We are also promoting the National Park as an effective case study for some of the RAFE priorities.

### **European Engagement**

8. We have shared the Research Strategy with Europarc who are currently engaged in European wide work to better connect protected areas with research capacity and knowledge exchange. CNPA was represented at a Europarc workshop sharing good practice and experience on research in protected areas in 2014. Europarc are in discussions with the European Commission about potential financial support to further develop good practice in research networks.

### **Long Term Monitoring**

9. The research steering group is currently seeking resource to bring together the range of long term monitoring being undertaken in the Cairngorms in order to develop consistency in data handling, presentation and availability; connect data sets where relevant; identify gaps and present an overview of long term monitoring. This is based on recent international examples such as the Sierra Nevada National Park's 'Global Change Observatory'. UHI Centre for Mountain Studies has recently secured an intern to begin this work in May 2015.

### **2015 Research Event**

10. We plan to hold a third research event in October 2015 (previous events in 2010 & 2013) to bring together researchers and land managers, businesses and community representatives. This will focus on:
  - a) Communicating research needs from those managing the Park;
  - b) Reporting on recent relevant research outputs; and
  - c) Building the community of researchers collaborating to deliver the Cairngorms Research Strategy.
11. We are currently seeking external funding to support this event.

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**March 2015**

**ANNEX I**

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Research priorities to 2017</b>	<b>Commentary on Delivery</b>
<p>How do we maintain and enhance Natura habitats and species in a changing context of climate, development, recreation and land use?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measuring and monitoring cumulative effects of change and pressures on Natura objectives;</li> <li>• Analysing the interplay of factors affecting capercaillie populations, including human disturbance and effects of management measures at a landscape scale;</li> <li>• Systems-scale analysis of factors affecting river SACs and their capacity to cope with population increase;</li> <li>• Impacts of plant/animal disease and invasive non-native species</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These are key themes within the RAFE strategy with opportunities to use the National Park as a case study;</li> <li>• University of Stirling has received funding approval from ESRC for a 4 year social science PhD on recreation behaviours and capercaillie to be managed jointly with CNPA;</li> <li>• CEH 'Openness' Project trialling method for recreation opportunity mapping</li> <li>• Spey Fisheries Board are supporting an MSc project analysing costs and benefits of water abstraction on River Spey</li> </ul>
<p>What is the natural capital of the Cairngorms National Park and what are the implications of management choices on ecosystem service delivery?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Valuing natural capital;</li> <li>• Trialling payment for ecosystem services;</li> <li>• Ecosystem service assessments;</li> <li>• Capacity of ecosystems to adapt to changes resulting from natural and human pressures in combination;</li> <li>• Alignment of ecosystem service delivery with existing agri-environmental measures and other policies (e.g. WFD)</li> <li>• New long term monitoring programmes for wider ecosystem services (beyond biodiversity)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These are key themes within the RAFE strategy with opportunities to use the National Park as a case study;</li> <li>• CEH undertaking current research with The Crown Estate (Glenlivet) on ecosystem services;</li> </ul>
<p>What are the socio-economic trends most likely to affect the Cairngorms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effects of increased accessibility resulting from A9 dualling on economy, employment, visitor trends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CNPA &amp; LAs carrying out analysis of population, housing need and demand for LDP2</li> </ul>

Research Question	Research priorities to 2017	Commentary on Delivery
National Park and how?	<p>and housing demand;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Likely population changes and mechanisms for delivering affordable and mid-market housing in a remote pressured area;</li> <li>• Impacts of land reform and community empowerment Bill;</li> <li>• The impacts of regular participation in outdoor activities and outdoor learning on attainment and social values in young people or other groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topics suitable for MSc student projects</li> <li>• Funding bid in place with Education Scotland for joint research with University of Edinburgh School of Education re impacts of outdoors physical activity (informing Active Cairngorms)</li> </ul>
How are the visitor patterns, numbers and experiences across the Park likely to change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visitor types, numbers and distribution in time and space including more detail on minority groups and equality indicators;</li> <li>• Future visitor trends;</li> <li>• Visitor expectations and satisfaction;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topics suitable for MSc student projects</li> <li>• CNPA commissioned visitor survey completing in 2015</li> </ul>
What are the most effective management and governance mechanisms to deliver the Partnership Plan?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effectiveness of and future models for multi-sector and multi-agency governance and partnership delivery;</li> <li>• Capacity and opportunities for community ownership of assets and community-led development;</li> <li>• What is the role for citizen science in the Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These are key themes within the RAFE strategy with opportunities to use the National Park as a case study;</li> <li>• CNPA is associate partner in a Northern Periphery Programme preparatory project on best practice in governance/community involvement in heritage management</li> </ul>