
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DISCUSSION

Title: ACTIVE CAIRNGORMS: A PROJECT TO DELIVER A RENEWED OUTDOOR ACCESS STRATEGY FOR THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK

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Purpose

To discuss the scope and development of the Active Cairngorms Strategy

Recommendations

That the Board considers the project aims objectives and scope, to inform project development.

Executive Summary

A new Active Cairngorms strategy will replace the current Outdoor Access Strategy developed in 2006/7. This is a key component of our core strategies alongside Cairngorms Nature and the Economic Development Strategy.

Much of the existing outdoor access strategy is still relevant, though there has been a shift in public policy priorities and National Park Plan context since publication. Planning for outdoor access is now recognised as a key driver for delivering The Scottish Government's national outcomes.

The strategy will aim to increase levels of physical activity, empower communities to develop a sense of responsibility for the Park, support conservation management and provide outstanding visitor and learning experiences.

The strategy will be informed by stakeholder engagement, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment.

A draft will be produced by the end of 2014 with a 12 week statutory public consultation taking place from January 2015. The completed strategy will be launched in Spring 2015.

ACTIVE CAIRNGORMS – FOR DISCUSSION

Strategic Context

1. Although many sections of the previous outdoor access strategy are still relevant there has been a shift in public policy priorities since publication. Planning for outdoor access is now recognised as a key driver for delivering The Scottish Government's national outcomes. Development and promotion of outdoor access is a key deliverable of The Scottish Government's Physical Activity Implementation Plan, Cycle Action Plan, Walking Strategy and other policy areas.
2. Renewal of the Outdoor Access strategy is identified in the NP Partnership Plan and is a key means to deliver many of the plan's programmes, particularly outcome three: People enjoying the Park, but also integral to delivering conservation management and economic development.

Project Aims

3. The project will deliver an adopted strategy for the Cairngorms National Park that:
 - a) Integrates with other CNPA strategies (especially Cairngorms Nature) to deliver an effective spatial strategy;
 - b) Promotes a partnership approach to increasing physical activity and active travel;
 - c) Empowers residents and visitors to participate in and develop a sense of responsibility for the National Park;
 - d) Delivers outstanding visitor and learning experiences focused on key priorities;
 - e) Provides a focus for partnership effort and capital investment.

Scope

4. This is a strategy for the whole of the National Park. It will promote a partnership approach between the Scottish Government and its agencies, Local Authorities, NHS Boards, Land Managers, Activity Providers and Communities.
5. The strategy will deliver policies and priorities for the management and promotion of recreation and access for the next 5 years that address:
 - a) Review of the existing outdoor access strategy policies and outcomes.
 - b) Improving the health and wellbeing (physical and mental) of residents and visitors.
 - c) Developing active travel facilities and promoting modal shift.
 - d) Encouraging environmental volunteering.
 - e) Non vehicular recreation: walking, cycling, equine, water sports, nature tourism.
 - f) Management, development, maintenance, design and promotion of Core Paths, Long Distance Routes, Community Paths and associated infrastructure.
 - g) Trailhead infrastructure and priorities for development.
 - h) Outdoor access learning and promotion: SOAC, nature conservation, modal shift, health and economic benefits.

6. Excluded from the scope are:
 - a) Day to day activities of CNPA staff or stakeholders.
 - b) Detailed delivery or action plans.
 - c) Management and promotion of “pay to access” recreational activities such as snow sports.
 - d) Wider forms of recreation and sports development (field sports, gyms etc).
 - e) Non countryside related volunteering.
 - f) Motorised transport infrastructure (public roads and railways) and other modes of public transport

Proposed Objectives

7. The proposed objectives of the project are to:
 - a) Increase levels of physical activity, identifying baseline and setting targets.
 - b) Increase active travel, identifying baseline and setting targets.
 - c) Increase environmental volunteering, identifying baseline and setting targets.
 - d) Deliver a spatial strategy for recreation management that:
 - i. Helps protect species and habitats:
 - 1) Identify areas where outdoor access is adversely impacting protected species;
 - 2) Identify strategies/policies/land manager advice for the future recreational management of these sites.
 - ii. Identify key access priorities for capital investment:
 - 1) Identify key trailheads for development;
 - 2) Identify core paths and long distance routes for development;
 - 3) Deliver a plan for visitor monitoring (data collection and analysis).

Engagement

8. Prior to formal public consultation the project will be informed by bespoke ‘one to one’ engagement with key stakeholders. These will include land management, community recreation user group representatives, health bodies and key public sector partners. The Local Outdoor Access Forum will advise on development of the strategy and a member of the forum will join the project board.
9. A 12 week public consultation will be held at the start of 2015 on a draft strategy and accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Key points for consideration

10. The Board is invited to consider the scope and development of the strategy, with specific reference to:
 - a) Delivering the National Park Partnership Plan and connections with Cairngorms Nature, the Economic Development Strategy and Sustainable Tourism Strategy;
 - b) Engaging and building relationships with key delivery partners;
 - c) Priorities and expectations of the strategy.

Next Steps

- a) Develop draft strategy with key partners;
- b) Discussion on draft strategy at Board meeting on 12th December 2014;
- c) Public consultation from January 2015.

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