
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: NATIONAL PARK PARTNERSHIP PLAN ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

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Purpose

To report annual progress in delivering the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan and consider any areas where further discussion at Board meetings or with partners is required.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- a) Note progress with delivery of the National Park Partnership Plans over the course of 2012/13;
- b) Consider what issues warrant further discussion at forthcoming Board meetings (and with partners where appropriate);

Executive Summary

This paper gives an overview of delivery of the National Park Partnership Plan over the financial year 2012/13 and the first few months of 2013/14. It shows significant progress towards the outcomes set out in the National Park Partnership Plan and a sense of what work has been undertaken during the past 18 months as well as what to expect over the next year.

The paper also highlights the work of the National Park Strategic Delivery Group in monitoring and reporting progress, including the production of an easy-read progress report for web and print publication. An outline of the programme for October's National Park Partnership meeting to be chaired by the Minister for Environment and Climate Change is included so that Board members can see how the full partnership is involved in monitoring and addressing future delivery challenges.

Progress and plans for developing a Capital Investment Plan for the National Park and a research strategy to make better use of research in the Park are also outlined with a timetable for next steps.

NATIONAL PARK PARTNERSHIP PLAN ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT - FOR DECISION

Introduction

1. This paper provides the National Park Partnership and Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) Board with an update on delivery of the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan. Monitoring reports are produced twice a year based on March and September reference points. This is the third update on delivery of Plan. The previous update was in April 2013.
2. The paper has 4 sections:
 - a) An update on the National Park Partnership Strategic Delivery Group;
 - b) An update on the forthcoming National Park Partnership Meeting (21st October 2013);
 - c) A summary of indicators associated with the National Park Partnership Plan's five-year outcomes and an update on delivery of the Plan's delivery;
 - d) Next steps including; publication of a easy-read annual progress summary; development of a National Park Research Strategy and research event; work to develop a National Park Capital Investment Plan.

Background

3. The National Park Partnership Plan is the plan that coordinates how the aims of the National Park will be delivered. Although it is prepared by the National Park Authority, it was developed with the help of many organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors, as well as interested groups and communities in the National Park. The National Park Partnership includes the organisations that are best able to coordinate delivery of the Plan.
4. The National Park Partnership Plan for 2012-2017 was approved by the Environment Minister in June 2012. It sets out the vision for the National Park and three long term outcomes as:

***An outstanding National Park,
enjoyed and valued by everyone,
where nature and people thrive
together***



5. The Plan also sets out 10 five-year outcomes that provide the focus for work for the five years between 2012 and 2017 and will help to deliver the vision and long term outcomes. A series of programmes and with work packages were identified with partners help deliver those outcomes and form the starting point for delivery of the National Park Partnership Plan.

The National Park Partnership Strategic Delivery Group








6. The National Park Partnership Strategic Delivery Group is a small sub-group of the partnership including senior representation from organisations (public/private/voluntary) with responsibilities for managing the Park beyond individual project delivery. It meets twice a year to oversee monitoring and reporting of progress.
7. The second meeting of the group was held on 3 September 2013 and considered indicators and monitoring data, progress reporting and development of a National Park capital investment plan. It was also used to prepare for the next full National Park Partnership Meeting chaired by the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Paul Wheelhouse MSP, on 21 October 2013.

The National Park Partnership Meeting 2013

8. The National Park Partnership is chaired by the Minister for Environment and Climate Change and will be on 21 October 2013. The meeting brings together all partners involved in delivery to review progress, celebrate success and address challenges.
9. This year's meeting will have two distinct sessions. The first session will be for the Minister with the public sector partners to focus on public sector reform challenges in the Park. The second session will be with the full partnership and will address the key priorities for all partners to deliver together over the next year under the three Partnership Plan sections of:
 - a) **Sustainable Communities and Business**, focussing on the development and subsequent delivery of the Economic Diversification Strategy;
 - b) **People and Nature**, focussing on delivery of Cairngorms Nature and implications for partners such as targeting of SRDP funds.
 - c) **Enjoying the Park**, focusing on the particular challenges of the Glenmore area for managing visitors and sensitive species and habitats between different land holdings and public bodies.

National Park Partnership Plan Delivery – progress in delivering National Park Partnership Plan Five-year outcomes and update on delivery of Partnership Plan Programmes

10. Progress towards achieving the National Park Partnership Plan's five-year outcomes is tracked with the help of indicators and targets and summarised in Table I. They are not perfect measures of progress but help illustrate whether the outcomes are likely to be achieved.
11. More information on each indicator is given in Annex I. This information will soon be available on the CNPA website and a National Park Partnership Plan monitoring page.

Table I				
Five Year Outcomes	Indicators	Targets	Progress to 2017 Targets	Explanation
The economy of the Park will have grown and diversified, drawing on the Park's special qualities	Business confidence reported through Cairngorms Business Barometer	Increase		Business confidence improved through early 2013
	Number of jobs created in the Park	To have grown by more than the rate of population growth		No data yet
Businesses and communities will be successfully adapting to a low carbon economy	% population living within connection of high speed broadband or equivalent	75%		No change from 0% 2013
	Renewable energy production	To increase year on year		Increase of 20% in generating capacity
Communities will be more empowered and able to develop their own models of sustainability	The number of community enterprises generating income	Increase by at least 50%		New community enterprises formed and expected to generate income during 2013/14
The quality and connectivity of habitats is enhanced	Area of woodland	Increase of 6% (c.4,000 Ha) in total woodland area		New data expected late 2013
	Water quality	Maintenance or increase in water quality status		New data expected late 2013
The species for which the Park is most important are in better conservation status	Active conservation for LBAP priority species	Targets identified in Cairngorms Nature Plan achieved		6 of 26 priority species with active conservation projects
	Estates participating in Wildlife Estates Initiative	75% of estates in the Park		20 estates (26%) by April 2013, covering 85% of area of the Park
The special landscape qualities, including wildness, are conserved and enhanced	Qualities of wildness	Equivalent or increased area of the Park characterised as high or medium wildness		New data expected by 2017
Settlements and built development will retain and enhance the distinct sense of place and identity in the Park	Number of conservation area improvement projects	To cover all conservation areas		New data expected late 2014
More people will enjoy, learn about and help to conserve and enhance the Park	Number of volunteer days spent caring for the Park per year	Increase by 50% by 2017		Increasing from 900 in 2011/12 to 1200 in 2012/13
The expectations of visitors are met or exceeded	Visitor satisfaction reported in Cairngorms Visitor Survey	Increase		Next Visitor Survey results due 2014/15
The Park's recreation opportunities have improved the health and enjoyment of residents and visitors	Number of people using promoted core paths	Increased path use overall and more even spread throughout year		27% increase in use of sample core paths with people counters

12. Table 2 below summarises activity within the twelve National Park Partnership Plan programmes and their work packages. It includes highlights of work, so is not an account of all activity.

Table 2. Summary of National Park Partnership Plan Programme Activity	
Programme	Key Work Packages
1 Supporting business	<p>1a Enterprise Forum, economic strategy development and implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Enterprise Forum has met and started work to prepare the Economic Diversification Strategy. • The CNPA have commissioned a review of the Economic Health of the Park Report from 2010. <p>1b Skills and Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBP, RDCDMO and Business Gateway continue to deliver training for businesses. <p>1c Food and drink development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cairngorms Food for Life project launched Cairngorms Community Orchards project. • The Highlands and Islands Food and Drink Awards are Park-wide for 2013. • ‘Cairngorms Larder’ free guide to food and drink in the Park launched with the List at the Royal Highland Show 2013. • Eat Well, Eat Local campaign will have ‘Best of the Wurst’ Beer and Sausage celebration of local produce this October. • Royal Deeside Food and Fiddle Fortnight festival being held in October. <p>1d Growing the Cairngorms Business Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Business partnership Annual Business Conference will be on 7 November 2013. • The CBP’s Business Barometer has shown growing business confidence in the Park for short and long term future.
2 Infrastructure & communications improvements	<p>2a Improving IT and mobile communications connectivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cairngorm Mountain has recently secured a broadband connection through innovative linking with Aviemore. • Badenoch Broadband and Communications based at Laggan has continued to expand its service and sign up new connections. • British Telecom soon to launch website that shows where next generation broadband will be available and where not. <p>2b Improving access to housing for local needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careful work with Boat of Garten Community, developers, Seafield Estate, the CNPA and SNH led to a successful planning application for new housing at Boat of Garten.
3 Low Carbon Cairngorms	<p>3a Renewable Energy Generation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of private individuals, estates and communities have progressed renewable energy project proposals in the Park. <p>3b Low Carbon Living.</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research project to identify how the local economy and business can benefit from future Green Deal opportunities ready to start. <p>3c Low Carbon Land Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNH GreenStimulus Peatland Restoration Project being promoted in the Park.
4 Community Empowerment	<p>4a Community action planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of existing Community Action Plans to be conducted (2012-2014). Community Action Plan for Braemar completed. Plan for Blair Atholl being developed in 2014. • LEADER LAG bidding for new LEADER Programme from 2015. <p>4b Community capacity building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening Communities project leading to many training sessions and new community company in Grantown-on-Spey. • The Tomintoul & Glenlivet Development Trust (TGDT) successfully generating income through events and from operation of Smugglers Hostel in Tomintoul.
5 Building vibrant places	<p>5a Planning the best development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed Local Development Plan consulted on April- July 2013. <p>5b Delivering the most effective Planning Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scottish Government feedback on first Planning Performance Frameworks received. • CNPA planning team significantly restructured and strengthened to improve service delivery and efficiency. • Developers Forum, Community Council/Association Planning Network working well and improving communication with planning service. <p>5c Supporting the regeneration of Tomintoul and Glenlivet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Tomintoul & Glenlivet Development Trust (TGDT) successfully generating income through events and from operation of Smugglers Hostel in Tomintoul. • Ian White associates have developed gateway designs which are the subject of community consultation. Work is scheduled to start following planning permission and likely to be November 2013. <p>5d Quality in Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cairngorms National Park Design Awards used to create Good Design in the Park web pages with case studies of good design. • In depth discussions with Developers Forum members about proposals for a Design Panel for Park and other ways of improving design in the Park. <p>5e Townscape Enhancement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programming work to complete conservation area appraisals by 2014 with subsequent bid for improvement grants.

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6 Nature and Landscapes	<p>6a Wildlife Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cairngorms Nature Action Plan launched in May 2013. • Work started on spatial targeting for habitat expansion and creation across the Park to inform management decisions and targeting of public funds. • Developing a Capercallie Framework for the Park to secure the long term future of the bird's UK stronghold. • Scoping of montane woodland project started. • The Cairngorms Wildcat Project was completed, and the Cairngorms are identified as a stronghold in a new national wildcat action plan. <p>6b Cairngorms Landscapes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web-based landscape toolkit (first phase) up and running. • Futurescapes (Wetlands and woodlands) linked in to development of Cairngorms Nature. • Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership bid developing for first stage application 2014. <p>6c Designated Sites Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint-Agency Working on priority (Section7) deer sites continues. • Trial ranger service in Boat of Garten wood highly successful for managing recreation and preventing disturbance to capercaillie.
7 Supporting Land Management	<p>7a Land Management Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training supported through CNPA/LEADER funding for courses on farm security, snaring, deer stalking certificate, IACS refresher, water quality, heather habitat assessments, cattle management and sheep management. • Over 50 training days were part funded for specific skills (e.g. quad bikes, chainsaw certificate, trailer use etc) organised and attended by 122 people. <p>7b Advice and Support Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land management forum, Farmers Forum, monitor farm and CDAG continue to be active and usually well attended. • New programme of land management support and advice approved by CNPA Board. <p>7c Wildlife Estates Scotland Initiative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 85% of the area of the Park now under management by estates who are part of the Wildlife Estates Scotland Initiative. <p>7d Catchment Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catchment management partnerships (Dee, Spey and South Esk) remain highly active, each now developing river restoration projects. • Upper Dee riparian woodland project (Pearls in Peril) launched and staffed, developing projects • Spey Catchment Initiative has delivered the Allt Lorgy river

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	restoration project and pilot river processes study on the River Mashie and investigating opportunities to replicate at other locations in the catchment.
8 Leading Sustainable Tourism	<p>8a Implementing the strategy and action plan for sustainable tourism in the Cairngorms National Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-term review scheduled for autumn 2013 during which there will be an independent assessment with partners of actions delivered and priorities set for the next two and half years. <p>8b Cairngorm Rothiemurchus and Glenmore Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glenmore now forms part of the proposed Local Development Plan. • Forestry Commission Scotland and CNPA jointly engaged on masterplanning for future of FCS land holding at Glenmore. • Highland and Island Enterprise tendering the operation of Cairngorm Mountain through competitive dialogue. • Audit of existing tourism and visitor information in area nearing completion and highlighting new data on the numbers of visitors in the area. • A refreshed biodiversity audit of the area underway led by the CNPA and Scottish Natural Heritage.
9 Active Cairngorms	<p>9a Delivering and reviewing the Cairngorms National Park Outdoor Access Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to replace the outdoor access strategy with an Active Cairngorms Strategy programmed for 2014. <p>9b Promoting active enjoyment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health walks continue to meet demand in each community and proactive work with NHS Scotland and other partners is leading to a more integrated approach to delivering some of the key Scottish Government targets on health and activity. <p>9c Developing cycling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Cycling Action Plan developed. • Cairngorms Electric Bike project and network successfully launched and running through summer 2013. • The first Cairngorms Bike Festival held at Glenmore Lodge during National Parks Week in August 2013 with enthusiastic participants of all ages. • The new mountain bike trails on Crown Estate, Glenlivet are nearing completion. • New mountain bike skills facility at Carrbridge nearing completion
10 Outdoor learning	<p>10a Using National Parks in the Curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor learning with the National Parks project was extended until the end of 2012 and a three-year action plan for 2013-16 was drawn up by the partnership to ensure the legacy of the

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	<p>project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPD programme for local authority education services has been developed and Outdoor Learning Festivals planned for Highland and Aberdeenshire. • The National Parks Senior pupil residential and teacher training weekend held mid September 2013. • The National Parks media project continuing with primary schools using the 10th Anniversary and the Year of Natural Scotland as inspiration. <p>10b Learning from the Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Junior Ranger Project is operating in Highland, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Perth and Kinross with 6 secondary schools involved. • The John Muir Award continues to grow in Cairngorms National Park 10th Anniversary year with 2208 awards by end of August 2013. A special Cairngorms National Park branded certificate has been produced to mark this year. <p>10c Volunteering to Support Nature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CNPA has appointed a three month intern to look at the current levels of volunteering in the National Park and to discuss with partners the potential to develop further. This work is the precursor to developing a coordinated approach to volunteering across the National Park.
<p>11 Sharing the Stories</p>	<p>11a Coordination training and support for visitor managers/communicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBP are developing a ‘Make it Yours’ campaign to encourage tourism businesses to link their products and experiences more closely to the national park. The aim is to deliver high quality, sustainable and authentic experiences across the cairngorms. The campaign will be launched at the business conference in November 2013. <p>11b Developing and delivering inspiring campaigns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many events throughout year where 10th Anniversary of Cairngorms National Park and the Year of Natural Scotland were celebrated. Significant promotion of Cairngorms Nature and Celebrating Nature as well as cycling and electric bike project. • 2020 Vision project holding exhibition at Blair Castle during September 2013. • Further work on using the <i>Make it Yours</i> messages being developed. <p>11c Community Heritage Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project has completed archaeological survey at Dunachton and Kinraig Estate, discovering new evidence of prehistoric settlement. Alvie primary school pupils took part in a day of field survey of Kinraig.

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	<p>I 1b Experiencing National Nature Reserves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work is in progress to upgrade the visitor centres at Nethy Bridge (Abernethy and Dell Wood NNR) and Glenmore (Glenmore NNR). Both are scheduled to open in Spring 2014.
12 Visitor Access and infrastructure	<p>I 2a Management of core paths and outdoor access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community path leaflet for Aviemore completed and leaflets for Grantown on Spey and Laggan in development. • New path signage installed at Braemar and Kingussie. • New all abilities path at Ellan Wood Carrbridge and alternative path on Ballater Seven Bridges walk created. • Work underway to implement Speyside Way extension with detailed specification being drawn up and preparation for planning permissions and path agreements. <p>I 2b Maintaining and improving high quality visitor facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The refurbished Blair Atholl Visitor Centre & Ranger Base was formally opened in March. Project supported by Blair Atholl Area Tourist Association, Blair Charitable Trust, Perth & Kinross Council, Historic Scotland and Scottish Government. • Boat of Garten Station Square redevelopment with visitor information, interpretation and a 4.5m osprey feather sculpture opened in May. • Work has started in Nethy Bridge on a new unstaffed visitor information centre focussing on cultural heritage and the Abernethy and Dell Woods National Nature Reserve as part of a wider refurbishment of Nethy Bridge community hall. • Detailed proposals for upgraded visitor facilities at Laggan in development. <p>I 2c Scotland's National Parks Mountain Path Restoration Project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New and upgraded paths in the Loch Avon basin and Glen Feshie with a tranche of path works trainees recruited and working towards their SVQ.

Next Steps

Looking ahead to 2014

13. A lot of work is programmed for the coming year. A selection of highlights are summarised below:

Sustainable Communities and Business

- a) Completion of the Economic Diversification Strategy guiding investment and business development;
- b) A Capital Investment Strategy for the Park;

- c) Community Action Plan Blair Atholl and more community enterprises generating income from projects;
- d) New orchards established across the Park through the Cairngorms Community Orchards Project;
- e) Development of next LEADER Local Development Strategy.

People and Nature

- a) New river restoration projects on the rivers Spey and Dee;
- b) Woodland expansion including riparian woodland and development of a montane woodland project;
- c) Completion of a Capercallie Framework for the Park to secure the long term future of the bird's UK stronghold;
- d) First round application submitted for a Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnership Project for the Tomintoul and Glenlivet area.
- e) Farm management plans for wetlands and waders;
- f) More estates in the Park progressing through the Wildlife Estates Initiative.

Enjoying the Park

- a) Delivery of Tomintoul and Glenlivet Gateways Project to improve visitor facilities and information and upgrades to viewpoints on official Tourist Routes through the Park;
- b) Refurbishment of the Forestry Commission Glenmore visitor centre for visitors to Glenmore and the Park;
- c) Opening of the new Crown Estate Glenlivet mountain bike trails;
- d) Development of permanent facilities at Laggan Wolftrax mountain bike centre for cyclists and visitors to the Park;
- e) Construction of sections of the Speyside Way Extension from Aviemore towards Newtonmore;
- f) Preparatory work for extension of Deeside Way to Braemar.

National Park Partnership Plan Annual Progress Report for 2012/13

- 14. During the implementation of the first National Park Plan we published annual progress reports each year till 2012. They were a good way of illustrating progress for staff, partners and politicians. They had a fairly formal format as a printed A4 report.
- 15. For this National Park Partnership Plan, we are producing a smaller, lighter, easy read summary of progress in advance of the Partnership Meeting. It includes illustrative case studies and will be available as PDFs of the CNPA website and as an A5 printed booklet. We intend to publish additional case studies throughout each year, building up a bank of material throughout the life of the Plan. The report is based on the 2012/13 financial and though it covers a little less progress than this Board paper, uses the same information. The format and content has been informed by the strategic delivery group to ensure a wide partner involvement. We will distribute copies of the report to the Board as soon as they are printed.

National Park Research Strategy

16. The National Park Partnership Plan commits the CNPA to coordinating a research strategy to support delivery and long term planning. We are developing that strategy this autumn with the help of researchers and a research event to be held on 14 November 2013. This event will also mark the Launch of the Cairngorms National Park as the UK's first 'Long Term Socio-Ecological Research' (LTSER) site. This sets the Park up as one of European network of sites where researchers and research institutions collaborate and share information across disciplines to improve its use and effectiveness.
17. A small research group of the CNPA and active research institutions has been established to support the formation of the LTSER and development of the research strategy. Following November's research event a draft research strategy will be prepared and we plan to take a paper to the Board for approval of a research strategy in March 2014.

National Park Capital Investment Plan

18. The CNPA is coordinating development of a National Park Capital Investment Plan for the Park. It will ensure that future capital funding is spent in a consistent, transparent way that delivers the long term needs and aspirations of the National Park. It will draw on the key strategic plans for the Park:
 - a) Scottish Government Performance Framework;
 - b) National Park Partnership Plan;
 - c) Cairngorms Nature;
 - d) Access Strategy/Active Cairngorms Strategy;
 - e) Local Development Plan;
 - f) Economic Diversification Strategy;
 - g) LEADER Local Development Strategy;
19. The plan will identify priority projects where funding is not secured or programmed and that add value to existing committed spending. In identifying the potential project list, the CNPA will also draw of the content of community action plans to support community aspirations where possible.
20. The Capital Investment Plan will set out prioritised areas of investment, projected timescales and estimated values, discussed and agreed with partners. The Strategic Delivery Group should take an overview of this, ensuring it targets the right priorities and that the relevant partners co-ordinate investment plans. We propose that rather than a static document the Capital Investment Plan is updated on a 6 monthly basis through the NPPP Strategic Delivery Group meetings and is reviewed by the NPA Board on an annual basis. We will take a paper to the Board on the Capital Investment Plan in December 2013.

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