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CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

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**Title:** Update and forward look November 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.

**Advice sought:**

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 The Park Authority Board has approved the option of working with Upper Deeside Access Trust to cover the whole Park. This will require UDAT to change its Board structure and operational area and name. Recruitment of a new Trust Manager is underway and a representative of CNPA has joined UDAT as a Director to help manage the transition process. UDAT are currently looking at upland path priorities for the future and the CNPA are planning a workshop to engage with stakeholders over the findings early in 2008.

**Community Investment Programme**

1.2 Applications for 2007-08 are now closed and we are aiming to have committed 5/6<sup>ths</sup> of the budget by April 2008. Communities have come forward with requests for funding for the following: to undertake a path audit of a community network; to commission detailed specifications for a bike skills trail and a difficult-to-repair path; to put in an all-abilities path; to repair a damaged section of paths; and to promote a project encouraging responsible behaviour amongst hill-goers. Successful applications continue to be high quality and well-executed.

**Glenmore off-road Route**

1.3 Work is due to commence on the last remaining section (5.4km) of the Aviemore to Glenmore off-road route. Natura issues have been resolved, planning permission has been given, the funding package is in place and the contractors have been selected. Commencement of the works has, however, been delayed over difficulties reaching an agreement between CNPA and Rothiemurchus Estate. It is hoped that an agreement is now very close and that the works will commence shortly.

## 2. PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE OUTDOOR ACCESS AND MANAGEMENT

- 2.1 Outdoor Access staff (FP) involved in Steering Group for SNH/ Institute of Outdoor Learning project to run workshops which will promote the Code to outdoor instructors throughout Scotland.
- 2.2 Outdoor Access staff met with Land Based Business Training colleagues and external trainers to discuss training for outdoor instructors in use of the Know the Code Activity Packs
- 2.3 Outdoor Access Open Event on September 30 drew attention to a range of access considerations across the Park.

## 3. PROMOTING VISITOR INFORMATION ABOUT OUTDOOR ACCESS OPPORTUNITIES

### Interpretation in the Cairngorms

- 3.1 James Carter has been appointed to develop an interpretation guidance document for the National Park. James is a consultant with over twenty years' experience in interpretation. He has written and edited a number of advisory publications including *A Sense of Place*. The document aims to present the Park's unique qualities in an inspirational way; enthuse individuals and organisations that have direct contact with the public about the possibilities for linking their interpretation or other communication to the Park's qualities; and help them develop effective interpretation and communication through clear, accessible guidance.

### Panoramic maps

- 3.2 Two of the five panoramic views of the Park have been completed (views from the East and South-West) with the third in pencil sketch stage (view from the North-West). The two completed panoramas will be the first to be publicly displayed as they form the centrepiece of information and interpretation placed at Park entry points at Dinnet and Laggan. This is expected later this year.

### The Vital Spark

- 3.3 The National Park hosted The Vital Spark Interpretation Conference from 30 September - 3 October in the Aviemore Highland Resort. This international conference brought together over 300 heritage interpreters and 70 speakers from all over the world who shared experiences, learned from each other and reinforced the region's position as a world class leader in heritage interpretation.

### Ranger Services

- 3.4 Following discussions with Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and Local Authorities, Officers of the CNPA will seek approval from the Board in November to take on the discretionary ranger grant for services operating within the National Park. The overall aim is to provide better Park-wide coordination of services linking the work of rangers to actions in the National Park Plan. Any transfer will need to reflect changes to national ranger policy that SNH are due to publish in early 2008.
- 3.5 If approved the transfer of roles is likely to take place in 2008/09. This change would result in the CNPA providing discretionary grant and input to the work programmes of nine of the 12 publically supported ranger services in the National Park. The ranger services outwith this structure would be Forestry Commission Scotland, Cairngorm

Mountain and NTS Mar Lodge. The CNPA will work with these services through concordats.

- 3.6 This approach recognises that most ranger services are delivered through a partnership which relies on the rangers doing work that benefits all partners.

#### **Point of Entry Marker Project**

- 3.7 Work has started on installing the permanent markers at A9 Slochd and A95 east of Cromdale.

- 3.8 In August the CNPA Board decided to postpone the installation of a permanent marker on A9 at Drumochter until the outcome of the National Park Boundary review scheduled for 2008. The Board also agreed to support Transport Scotland in upgrading and landscaping the lay-by at Drumochter and installing Park-wide information (a panoramic view from the south west).

- 3.9 As part of the Point of Entry project the first panoramic map of the park viewed from the east will be installed in Dinnet car park later this year or early in 2008.

### **4. PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT FOR ENJOYMENT OF THE PARK**

#### **The Heather Hopper**

- 4.1 It is proposed that the 501 Heather Hopper bus service will run again in 2008, although THC tender has to be re-tendered, and costs will not be known until December 2007. It will run for 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. Due to cost implications, the buses will not be DDA compliant and are unlikely to be able to take cycles. The commercially run 502 service from Banchory to Pitlochry via Braemar and Glenshee will likely run again, and could be for a longer period. Currently it is Scottish school holiday dates only.

#### **The Cairngorms Explorer**

- 4.2 It is expected to publish this brochure again in 2008. It incorporates all public transport bus timetables, taxi and train information. Alongside the timetables, we will be publicising Cairngorms on a Shoestring, a series of activities, mainly active travel options, which can be done cheaply around the Park.

### **5. MISCELLANEOUS**

#### **Outdoor Access Strategy**

- 5.1 This has now been published and will be circulated to stakeholders, and interested partners in due course.

#### **National Access Forum**

- 5.2 There was an annual meeting of the National Access Forum and Local Access Forum on 31 October 2007 in Aberdeen which covered topics of interest to both nation and local forums including wild camping and outdoor events. There was a presentation on access and disabled users; and updates from the 'local' access forums. One of the Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum members, Nic Bullivant, presented to the meeting.

## John Muir Award

5.3 The project has been extended for a further 3 years from April 2008. One of the outputs for the next three years will be the creation of a Junior Ranger scheme engaging young people from youth organisations and schools. Specific information about the Park, the Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code will underpin this new scheme. The creation of the scheme links to one of the objectives of the National Park Plan which is “to create youth ambassadors and advocates for the National Park”.

### ***Forward look to main areas of work anticipated before next Forum meeting (21 February 2008)***

- a) Submission of Core Paths Plan to Ministers
- b) Stakeholder seminar to look at developing guidance for organised outdoor access events
- c) Developing comprehensive Cairngorms paths records or rights of way, promoted routes and eventually core paths
- d) Finalising path agreement for Glenmore Off-Road route and building the route.

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