

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: CAIRNGORMS GREEN RECOVERY PLAN UPDATE

Prepared by: CNPA MANAGEMENT TEAM

Purpose

1. The CNPA Board approved the Green Recovery Plan in June 2020. There has been considerable work carried out on the Plan since then and this paper has been produced to update the board on the current position and show progress.
2. The recovery from Covid is going to be difficult and there are many businesses and residents still having major issues. This paper shows the breadth of support the CNPA has been involved in since June to deliver the Plan.

Recommendation

That the Board:

- a) **Note the progress being made on the Green Recovery Plan.**

Cairngorms Recovery Plan

The plan contains a number of specific sections. Each section has been updated with relevant information on the work that has been undertaken since agreement by the Board in June.

| Action | Update |
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| Cairngorms Recovery Fund to be developed | <p>Cairngorms Recovery Fund launched on 20 August and closed on 20 September. The Fund comprised £100k from CNPA and 30k from The Cairngorms Trust. The Board agreed four guiding principles for the Fund – Green solutions, Wellbeing and economic growth, Employment and the Long-term aims of Cairngorms National Park. The Fund was widely promoted and 27 applications were received for a total level of support of £263k. The applications were assessed against a set of evaluation criteria and decisions to fund 13 project made by a Panel involving external partners including business and community groups. A detailed review paper was discussed at Finance and Delivery Committee on 13 November.</p> <p>Full list of projects that have been awarded funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboyne & Upper Deeside Rotary Club: Litter Picking Upper Deeside • Dalwhinnie Community Council: Ben Alder Road Carpark • Blair Atholl & Area Tourism Association: Blair Atholl Community and Business Development project • Dee District Salmon FisheryBoard: Glen Muick Woodland Connectivity • Spey Catchment Initiative: River Truim Riparian Planting • Caberfeidh Horizons: Building on Our Strengths • Boat of Garten Community Hall: COVID 19 recovery & Green Events • Cairngorms Business Partnership: Building a sustainable welcome for camper vans • Glenshee & Strathardle Tourist Association: Glenshee Visitor Centre |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Castle Roy Trust SCIO: Castle Roy’s Covid Crisis • Growbiz Scotland: Supporting Creative Enterprise in the Cairngorms • RSPB: Rare Invertebrates in the Cairngorms • Braemar Community Ltd: Tomrichton Community Wood |
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Business

Senior Responsible Officer – Murray Ferguson

| Action | Update |
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| Support Cairngorms Tourism Emergency Response Group | CTERG has met on a weekly, and then fortnightly, basis throughout the summer and autumn as a sub-group of the Cairngorms Tourism Partnership, chaired by Board member Janet Hunter. Very good representation by partners from key private and public sector bodies within and around the Park. Key topics discussed included deployment of business support; research on business confidence and visitor aspirations; #CairngormsTogether campaign marketing; integration of tourism, community and visitor management, input to national tourism discussions, etc. Full meeting of CTP took place on 9 November to look at future changes to Tourism Action Plan. A board report will be tabled in March 2021. |
| Attend Scottish Government Rural Economy Stakeholder Group, | Attendance ongoing throughout COVID response period. Progress has been positive in securing positive policy outlook toward some form of Community Led Local Development (CLLD) replacement to the EU funded LEADER Programme. Remaining and considerable dependencies on the overall Scottish budget position and UK Government’s policy development around the “Shared Prosperity Fund” which is intended to replace EU funding following EU Exit |
| CNPA to support Cairngorms Business Partnership through grant funding. | Additional support has been provided to CBP over the period to encourage sustained membership and to focus on business survival, recovery and marketing. CBP (along with other destination organisations e.g. VisitAberdeenshire and Moray Speyside, etc.) have done |

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| | <p>exemplary work over a very challenging period. Additional support was provided to CBP via Green Recovery Fund to work on motor-home coordination and information; and joint work with Growbiz on business support and mentoring was undertaken. Liaison is now underway with HIE who are providing dedicated destination support funding.</p> |
| <p>Visitor & resident marketing to be developed at appropriate time as lockdown measures ease</p> | <p>Marketing support and communications has been developed with partners. A joint marketing campaign for the winter period is being developed. Significant messaging deployed throughout the summer season through all channels.</p> |
| <p>Develop Growbiz 'Smart Villages' to enhance digital connectivity and business resilience post Covid.</p> | <p>Four smart villages are in development in Ballater, Braemar, Grantown and at Park-wide scale focussing on the creative sector. The work is led by the Charity Growbiz and is integrated with the work they are undertaking on enterprise support and mentoring. Meeting of the Digital Steering Group will take place to review the work later in November</p> |
| <p>Deliver a comprehensive planning service to enable recovery</p> | <p>The Planning Service has continued throughout the period with revised procedures in place for holding meetings online, (including participation by objectors and communities) and to cover for the challenges in conducting site visits. Development of policy has continued without interruption and the LDP will be considered for adoption on 11 November. Significant casework has been progressed including at Ballater and Kingussie for affordable housing, at Cairngorm Mountain for ski-related development. Progression of planning conditions has allowed important work to commence on construction of new distillery at Grantown and to repair Funicular. The Developers Forum took place on 11 November to look at the new LDP and what challenges developers are others are facing.</p> |
| <p>Seek resources to research, investigate and plan for how we build resilience, sustainability and diversification into Cairngorms economy and communities as part of the next iteration of the National Park Partnership Plan</p> | <p>Taken forwards through discussions about Heritage Horizons project and discussion at the Economic Steering Group about transition to a wellbeing economy. Skills Development Scotland are now providing additional support o to Growbiz to undertake skills deployment workshops within the Cairngorms NP.</p> |

Communities

Senior Responsible Officer – Murray Ferguson

| Action | Update |
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| CNPA to support VABS, Marr Area Partnership & T&G Development Trust through Grant in Aid funding | Enhanced direct support was provided. Regular meetings took place with Community Liaison Officer network over summer and autumn. Assistance was provided in securing and deploying additional funds through local-authority led schemes. VABS and MAP were directly involved in making decision about deployment of Green Recovery Fund. |
| Develop a new approach to community engagement (e.g. citizen's assembly) at National Park level to build on the work undertaken through Covid response. | <p>This work is a significant part of the Heritage Horizons bid that the CNPA is developing for submission in Feb 2021. However, during the summer the CNPA and others have engaged with residents, community councils, Park councillors, estates through a series of zoom meetings. This will be continued during the winter in preparation for next season.</p> <p>Discussions are also underway with Scottish Government about development of Community Climate Hubs based on the Park.</p> |
| Cairngorms Dark Skies Observatory Project | CES has decided not to take forward the application with NatureScot. |
| Request funding from Scottish Government for LEADER network to support community and business development. Potential to update LDS as part of preparing for next NPPP | Influencing work ongoing through both Ministerial Rural Economy Stakeholder Group and LEADER structures. Feedback from Ministers and Scottish Government Officers is very positive on commitment to put in place replacement of LEADER funds in ongoing support of communities and rural businesses, with broad support from a wide range of organisations. Outcomes tied into 21/22 budget round. Work underway to consider use of any remaining national LEADER Programme underspend in 20/21. |

Land Management, Climate Change and Conservation

Senior Responsible Officer – Pete Mayhew

| Action | Update |
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| Support woodland expansion & peatland restoration work in the Cairngorms National Park | Woodland work on target with 1000ha of woodland expansion being delivered each year A 3 year peatland programme for the Cairngorms National Park is being agreed with Scottish Government to increase capacity and ensure over 1000ha per annum is delivered. Update on future funding position for Cairngorms Peatland Programme presented to Finance and Delivery Committee 13 November |
| Biodiversity Challenge Fund delivery. | Delivery underway and on track. Works include support for the Rare Invertebrates Cairngorms project, wader habitat improvement in the ECMP and SWWI areas, fresh water pearl mussel reinforcement, aspen planting and pine hoverfly translocation. |
| Catchment Management & river restoration delivery | Riparian planting underway on the rivers Truim and Muick, scheduled for completion March 2021. Plans being developed with land managers and community bodies for re-naturalisation of the Sluggan burn, surface water management in Kingussie (Gynack burn and confluence of the Calder/ Spey), Milton burn, extension of the Alt Lorgy re-naturalisation, removal of embankments on the Dee floodplain at Mar Lodge and plans for linking upstream management in the S.Esk catchment with the downstream communities of Brechin and Kirriemuir. |
| Stage 2 of Capercaillie Project submitted to NLHF | Successful application for delivery phase. Project now underway to <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve and create more habitat for capercaillie. 2. Help communities to create and deliver their own community-led actions for capercaillie. 3. Raise awareness of the plight of capercaillie and how people can help. 4. Research the genetic diversity of capercaillie in the National Park to help inform action. 5. Strengthen current capercaillie monitoring to enable more informed decisions. |
| Developing Heritage Horizons bid to NLHF | On track for submission of bid in February 2021. |

Visitor Management

Senior Responsible Officer – Pete Mayhew

| Action | Update |
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| Develop an easing of lockdown visitor management plan for the Cairngorms | Visitor Management Plans were developed for the whole Cairngorms plus specific plans for Deeside and Glenmore. The visitor management season review was held on 28 October (see visitor management update paper). |
| Develop easing of lockdown comms strategy as part of wider visitor management plan | Easing of lockdown comms strategy was put in place and significant and successful comms were delivered through 2020. CNPA continues to promote responsible opportunities to safely enjoy the National Park shaping the emphasis on current Scottish Government guidance and using the overall 'strap line', developed with Cairngorms Business Partnership, of #CairngormsTogether. Traditional media interest in the summer was extensive and generally positive ranging from interviews with BBC Radio Scotland to webcasts, and newspapers from Press and Journal to Sunday Times. Social media uptake of communications is covered in the Visitor Management paper. See Visitor Management Paper for more info. |
| Support visitor management through the development of CNPA seasonal ranger service & existing ranger services through grant support | 9 seasonal rangers were employed in summer 2020 until 30 October 2020. 2 rangers have been employed for the winter season to help prepare for the deployment of rangers next year. Grant support was provided for estate-based ranger services. |
| Capitalise on the increase in physical activity, engagement with nature, increase in local food networks & volunteering that has been seen in lockdown to encourage long-term behaviour change that benefits climate change, biodiversity, local economy | This work is significant part of the Heritage Horizons bid that the CNPA is developing for submission in Feb 2021 |

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| Rural Transport in Cairngorms and Kilkenny (TICK) | Purchase of a fleet of electric bikes to support more active travel as part of social prescribing for a more active and healthier lifestyle has now been procured, with local bike shops / businesses securing all supply contracts. Contract in place between Cairngorms Trust and Cycling UK to support business and community engagement activity, and ebike procurement and service development processes. Procurement of electric minibus for Community Transport Company in development. Kilkenny has picked up active travel element from Cairngorms NP and incorporated an aspect of this into their project. Cairngorms and Kilkenny exploring a joint film to promote their project collaboration toward end of project. |
| Spaces for People | Project not taken forward but looking at opportunities through Heritage Horizons. |

Capital Investment

Senior Responsible Officer – David Cameron

| Title | Update |
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| Shovel Ready (can happen in f/y 2020/21) | |
| Glenmore NMU path extension to enhance RTIF funding. | Funding secured from Scottish Government capital reallocations in summer 2020. Contract let and will be completed in December 2020 |
| Deeside Way Extension – Braemar to Invercauld Bridge | Funding not secured to build this section. |
| ECMP willow and juniper exclosures | Delnadamph juniper exclosure delayed to 2021 but will progress. Mar Lodge willow exclosure delayed to 2021 to allow combined transport of materials with peatland restoration project |
| Community Conservation Grant Scheme | Some elements of this incorporated into the Green Recovery Grant Fund launched in 2020. Remains in scope for future development work. |

| Medium Term (can potentially happen in 2021/22) | |
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| Cairngorms Nature Big Weekend | Work progressing for 2021 Big Weekend |
| Speyside Way – Boat to Aviemore resurfacing & traffic lights on Kingussie Bridge | No progress to report |
| Dalnain to Grantown NMU | Underway and scheduled for completion by March 2021 |
| Strathspey Riparian Planting – river Truim | Plans in development with landowners and community bodies |
| Strathspey River Restoration | Integrated into Heritage Horizons project |
| Nethy/Spey Confluence Project | No progress to report |
| Aviemore Street Furniture and Interpretation project | No progress to report |
| Motorhome discharge facilities at public toilets | Link to CBP Green Recovery Fund project and winter VMP work. |
| Badenoch visitor information enhancement | No progress to report |
| Longer Term (2022/23 onwards) | |
| Rails to Grantown | No progress to report |
| Cairngorm Mountain masterplan | Masterplan work ongoing and to be finalised in early 2021. Funicular repair has started. |
| Highland Folk Park enhancements | No progress to report |

Conclusion

3. There has been significant work undertaken across the Green Recovery Plan. There has also been other work developed that will contribute to the Green Recovery Plan, such as, the application to Kickstart for a variety of work placements across all the National Parks in the UK.
4. These are difficult times for business and communities across the Park but the CNPA and its partners are working hard to provide support where we can best add value.
5. The CNPA will continue to monitor the work that we are undertaking under the Green Recovery Plan and will provide an updated version at the June 2021 Board meeting. Many of the principles of the Green Recovery Plan can also be incorporated into the work as we look to develop for the next National Park Partnership Plan from 2022 – 2027.

CNPA Management Team
November 2020