
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

BRIEFING PAPER

Title: Briefing on National Park Plan Priority for Action: 7
(Raising Awareness and Understanding of the National Park)

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Purpose:

To inform the Board on progress made in delivering the National Park Plan Priority for Action on Raising Awareness and Understanding of the National Park.

Recommendations

That the Board note the progress made in delivering the National Park Plan Priority for Action.

Executive Summary

This paper is one of a series of background briefing papers to inform the Board, and in particular new members, of the work of CNPA. This paper covers the National Park Plan Priority for Action on Raising Awareness and Understanding of the National Park.

This paper explains why we needed to raise 'awareness and understanding' of the newly designated Cairngorms National Park and create a 'sense of place' for the area. The role of the National Park Authority is outlined and specific examples of partnership working are described. A detailed update of collective work is provided in Annex 1 and indicators of successful outcomes in Annex 2.

RAISING AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATIONAL PARK – BRIEFING PAPER

Rationale and Policy Context

1. When the Cairngorms National Park (CNP) was designated in September 2003 Scottish Government created a new line on the map of Scotland.
2. The legislation defined an area which had (amongst other things) a 'distinctive character and coherent identity'. However, almost every organisation that has a part to play in the management of the National Park has existing management units that sub divide the area: a part of five local authorities, three areas of Scottish Natural Heritage, three areas of Visit Scotland, two Enterprise Areas, etc. And of course the land is owned and managed by many different people. The management of the Park had a tendency to be fragmented.
3. Prior to designation of the Park only mountaineers and scientists would have been likely to refer to the area as the 'Cairngorms'. In order to realise some of the wider social and political benefits of the designation one of the key priorities in the National Park Plan (NPP) was to create a sense of place for the National Park and to build understanding about what makes it special. We also needed to work in a way that helped everyone involved with the area a sense of ownership of this new National Park.
4. In developing the Raising Awareness and Understanding Priority for Action in National Park Plan, partners agreed to work toward the following outcomes (a set of changes to be achieved over a five year period):
 - a) More people across Scotland will be more aware of the National Park, what makes it special and the opportunities it offers them.
 - b) Residents and visitors will appreciate the special qualities of the Park and understand more about their special management needs.
 - c) Everyone will know when they have arrived in the National Park and have a positive feeling about arriving in a special place.
 - d) More people who have visited the Park will have high quality experiences and will tell positive stories about the area.
 - e) There will be more opportunities for people to become practically involved in caring for the Park and its special qualities.
 - f) There will be more opportunities to learn about and enjoy the Park and its special qualities – especially for young people, people with disabilities and people on low incomes.
 - g) There will be more comprehensive and detailed information about the special qualities available in order to provide a better basis for conserving and enhancing them in the future.
5. Success in this area of work is measured by how well these outcomes have been achieved.

A New Way of Working

6. In discussing our work it is important to realise that the Cairngorms National Park Authority is very different from other National Park Authorities (NPA's) in Britain. The following are some of the key differences:
 - a) We own and manage no land (car parks, lay-bys, picnic areas, nature reserves, paths, etc)
 - b) We own and manage no buildings (visitor centres, information centres, ranger bases, etc)
 - c) We employ no 'front line staff' (visitor information staff, rangers, etc)
 - d) We have few powers or duties (those that we do have are largely concerned with planning and outdoor access)
 - e) CNP is by far the largest UK National Park and, with the exception of the newly forming South Downs NPA, we are the smallest NPA.
7. These factors alone mean that partners are key to the delivery of the National Park Plan. It is also important to stress that prior to designation there were many examples of excellent practice in the Cairngorms. To effect change we 'simply' need:
 - a) to encourage partners to present their work in the context of the National Park;
 - b) to expand work to cover the whole area; and
 - c) to group/coordinate similar activity to cover the whole area.
8. If there are agreed gaps in provision our role is to encourage others to fill them. It is fundamental to this way of working that partners are persuaded of the benefits of linking their work to the National Park in a way that helps them do what they can to achieve the Vision in the Park Plan.
9. This way of working means that; we do not duplicate the work of others, that our relatively small budget can add significant value to others projects, and that our budget is not constrained by ongoing commitment. However, experience over the last seven years shows that developing 'win-win' situations with partners appears to take longer than direct action: a small price to pay for sustainable working?
10. The main formal ways in which we have worked with our partners has been through the Sustainable Tourism Forum (formerly the Visitor Services, Information and Tourism Forum) and Delivery Team for Tourism, Business, Awareness and Understanding. These groupings bring together key partners to collectively advise on and deliver this area of the National Park Plan.

Collective Delivery

11. **Annex 1** lists key actions that have been delivered with partners in order to raise awareness and understanding of the National Park. **Annex 2** lists indicators that show whether the agreed outcomes are being delivered. However, in order to more fully explain our role it is worth looking in more detail at some specific examples.

Cairngorms National Park Brand

12. One of our earliest actions was to develop with partners a brand image for the National Park that represents the special qualities of the area and acts as a 'visual short hand' for the National Park. While the design of the brand may, to a small extent, influence what people initially feel about the area their long-term feelings are much more likely to be influenced by the overall experiences associated with the National Park. Therefore, it has been important to use the brand in situations that are authentic and positively promote the National Park.
13. It is important to realise that the brand is for the National Park it is not the organisational logo of the CNPA. This is very different for many other National Parks where the visual identity for the Park and the NPA are the same.
14. To date the brand has been used to try and achieve three linked outcomes:-
 - a) To inform people about CNP – *on signage, visitor information and interpretation.*
 - b) To promote quality products and experiences from CNP – *mainly used by businesses in CNP with quality and environmental standards.*
 - c) To promote responsible behaviour – *on leaflets, signs and ranger branding*
15. Use of the brand is determined by a set of agreed criteria approved by the Board but developed and administered by partners on the Brand Management Committee. Controlled use of the brand in this way helps build environmental sustainability and promotes high quality goods and services at the same time as giving businesses a competitive advantage. To date the brand has been used in over 200 applications by businesses, events, land managers and communities.
16. Arguably, the development of the brand and its use by partners has been the single most effective way of linking the work of others to the National Park.

Residents and visitors will appreciate the special qualities of the Park and understand more about their special management needs.

17. We are often told that the National Park has no visitor centre. This is true to the extent that there is no **one** National Park visitor centre and that CNPA do not run a visitor centre. However, there were many centres providing quality information and interpretation prior to the designation of the National Park. Our role is to encourage these centres to provide information in the context of the National Park.
18. However, in order for this work to be consistent we needed to agree a shared way of presenting the special qualities of the National Park. This led to the development, with partners, of 'Sharing the Stories of the Cairngorms National Park: a guide to interpreting the area's distinct and coherent identity.'
19. Over the last five years we have provided advice and financial support to partners to refurbish; information centres, ranger bases and visitor attractions. Each of these places informs visitors about an aspect of the special qualities of the National Park. Yet each site presents this experience in their own way encouraging the site manager to 'have ownership' of the work.
20. Collectively these centres receive in excess of 600,000 visits per annum.

There will be more opportunities to learn about and enjoy the Park and its special qualities – especially for young people, people with disabilities and people on low incomes.

21. We have focussed a lot of work on encouraging young people to learn about and become involved with the National Park. By promoting the John Muir Award, in partnership with John Muir Trust, we have encouraged many existing providers of outdoor education to link their work to the special qualities of the National Park and to encourage young people to be practically involved in conservation of the area. From a 'handful' of presentations in 2003 we are now seeing 2,000 John Muir Awards per annum presented in and around CNP.
22. Recently we have also been working with Learning Teaching Scotland and partner local authorities to fund a two year development post working with both National Parks. The aim is to promote the opportunities to use outdoor learning in the new Curriculum for Excellence. This work includes supporting outdoor learning networks and developing educational resources to encourage teachers to practically use the National Park for lessons.

Discussion

23. The style of working outlined above is common to our approach across the Priority for Action. The list of actions in Annex 1 and some positive indicators in Annex 2 suggest that good progress has been made in Raising Awareness and Understanding of the National Park but also that further work is required.
24. While there are many good examples of partners using the National Park to enhance their work, we still encounter some who appear to see little relevance and some who perhaps see the National Park as diluting their messages or their organisation's image or profile.
25. The delivery team meetings of key partners have been very good at information sharing from around the National Park and for developing specific projects. They could be more effective at forward planning, combining budgets and agreeing lead partners to deliver agreed actions. Perhaps on too many occasions we have had to lead actions to ensure delivery? Declining public sector budgets will require us to focus future activity in areas that are likely to have the most impact and partnership working is likely to be more important than ever.
26. Whether we have achieved enough in this Priority for Action in the first five years to reduce our input forms part of the ongoing consultation in developing the second National Park Plan.

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