
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: CNPA Support for the Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2006 - 2010

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to agree the CNPA's continued support of the Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan (CLBAP) process and continuing financial contribution to the employment and hosting of a shared CLBAP Officer for the period from November 2006 to end of March 2010.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- a) Agree the continuation of CNPA's active involvement with the Cairngorms LBAP process for the period 2006 – 2010; and
- b) Approve the allocation of resources to support the employment and hosting of the Cairngorms LBAP Officer to 2010.

Executive Summary

The Cairngorms LBAP, hosted and part-funded by the CNPA, has been delivering strategic planning and action on biodiversity across the Cairngorms since 1997. Its main purpose is to conserve and enhance the area's internationally and nationally important biodiversity for future generations by working with local people. From the outset the LBAP process has delivered action through a strong partnership of agencies, local government, Non-government organisations and community representatives.

The CNPA has a duty to further the conservation of biodiversity and ensure that this is done in a collective and coordinated manner, and that it uses its resources economically, efficiently and effectively. The CNPA has an opportunity to ensure the continued success of the LBAP, and the enhancement of the Cairngorms habitats and species by continuing to support both the LBAP process and the employment of the CLBAP Officer.

This paper highlights the success of the Cairngorms LBAP process to date and recommends that the CNPA continues to support the Cairngorms LBAP as the most effective and

practical mechanism for assisting the Park in achieving its biodiversity objectives. The ongoing development of the existing LBAP process can enable it to fulfil a core role in relation to informing and achieving a co-ordinated effort by the partners for biodiversity benefits across the Park, and in line with the four aims and National Park Plan.

CNPA Support for the Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2006 – 2010 – For Decision

Background

1. The Cairngorms is widely regarded as one of the most outstanding parts of Scotland, and supports a quarter of the 400 UK Priority Species and a large proportion of UK Priority Habitats such as native pinewoods. The purpose of the Cairngorms LBAP is to protect and secure the area's biodiversity for future generations by working with local people.
2. The Cairngorms LBAP was set up in early 1997 as part of a network of LBAPs across Scotland to achieve the UK government's international commitments to conserve biodiversity at both local and national levels. The LBAP is based on a broad partnership of organisations from across the area. It includes representatives from the local authorities, government agencies, non-governmental organisations, farming, local communities, forestry, water management, sporting and land-owning interests (see attached Annex 1 with details of Partnership members).
3. The founding aims of the Cairngorms LBAP are:
 - a) To take forward national biodiversity priorities (UK Habitat and Species Action Plans) by helping to deliver them at local level;
 - b) To conserve locally important species and habitats;
 - c) Engage local people and visitors in the management and enjoyment of biodiversity and ensure that they benefit from biodiversity;
 - d) To bring together in partnership those working in the Cairngorms to better achieve biodiversity conservation;
 - e) To deliver several key objectives in the Cairngorms Partnership's Management Strategy; (now modified to assisting in the delivery of key objectives in the Cairngorms National Park Plan); and
 - f) To set clear, achievable targets and be transparent about progress towards them.
4. In addition, the LBAP provides the biodiversity angle to assist with the delivery of all four of the Cairngorms National Park's aims.
5. An LBAP Officer has been employed since 1998. The main tasks achieved in the early stage of the process included completing a biodiversity audit of threatened and endangered habitats and species in the Cairngorms, and developing and publishing the Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan. The last three years saw initiatives to develop new practical delivery projects across the area; the development of effective partnership working with organisations (particularly with the Cairngorms National Park Authority); improving links and developing actions with lead partners on UK and Park priority action; coordinating biodiversity activities with Ranger Services operating within the Park; raising awareness of biodiversity and the issues impacting on it; assisting in the establishment of new officer led projects; managing several

successful projects aimed at specific issues; running a Biodiversity Grant Scheme and assisting in the development of many new projects supporting the involvement of local people. A full list of the achievements of the Cairngorms LBAP over the last 3 years is included in Annex 2.

6. The Cairngorms LBAP was initiated by the Cairngorms Partnership and the action plan developed through a two-year period of consultation with local people and key stakeholders. The LBAP process is managed by a full-time officer funded by CNPA (47%), SNH (35%), and three Local Authorities (Aberdeenshire, Angus and Highland) who each contribute 6%, costing approximately £38,000 per annum. The CNPA is also hosting the LBAP Officer and provides accommodation, office facilities, administration, IT & financial support (including banking), and day-to-day line management for the Cairngorms LBAP Officer as an in-kind contribution.
7. In addition to the costs of funding the LBAP Officer, the CNPA is contributing towards the costs of the Cairngorms Biodiversity Grant Scheme (along with five other funding partners), and supports a variety of specific biodiversity projects.
8. The strategic management and direction of the Cairngorms LBAP is agreed by the Cairngorms LBAP Management Group (comprising the 5 funding partners) and the Cairngorms LBAP Steering Group. The CNPA line manager transposes this direction into a meaningful work plan for the LBAP Officer, and provides guidance and support on the implementation of the work plan on a day to day basis.
9. The Cairngorms LBAP was established to cover the whole of the Cairngorms Partnership area. This extends beyond the boundaries of the Cairngorms National Park to cover a larger part of the Angus Glens; Atholl and Glen Shee in Perth and Kinross; as well as additional parts of Badenoch and Strathspey, mid Deeside, Strathdon, and Moray. In more recent years, and since the establishment of the National Park, the work of the officer has been concentrated mainly upon the area within the Park. Where a biodiversity issue requires consistency of approach beyond the boundary, for the benefit of the biodiversity interest within, the officer will treat the boundary as porous. This is especially the case in the Angus glens where the actions in the lower glens outwith the Park can have a big affect upon the upper glens inside the Park boundary.
10. The Cairngorms LBAP agreed funding package comes to an end in October 2006 and all the partners involved in the process are seeking to continue the LBAP for another 3 years. There is widespread agreement from the partners that the LBAP process is the most effective way to continue the delivery of action on conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the Cairngorms. Funding for the Officer post is required from the key partners up to March 2010 – SNH has already confirmed that it will continue supporting the post at 35%.
11. To date, the Board has not formally commented on the activity of the Cairngorms LBAP (although a Board member does sit on the LBAP Steering Group). This paper presents an opportunity for the Board to consider the achievements of the

Cairngorms LBAP, support the direction for the LBAP process in the next 3 years, agree that the LBAP process is the most appropriate mechanism for assisting the Park in the co-ordinated delivery of local biodiversity activity and action, and agree continuing financial and in-kind CNPA support for the CLBAP officer.

The Ongoing Context for Biodiversity Action

International and European Union Commitments

12. The UK made a formal international commitment to biodiversity action in response to the Rio Convention by launching its Action Plan in 1994. The European Union developed its own European Community Biodiversity Strategy in 1998, which is intended to be complementary to biodiversity strategies developed in individual member states. In 2001 EU Heads of State and Government reaffirmed their commitment at the Gothenburg Summit by pledging themselves to "halt the decline of biodiversity by 2012".

The Scottish Context

13. The commitment of the Scottish Executive towards biodiversity is clearly set out in the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004. This places a statutory duty on all public bodies to further the conservation of biodiversity. Section 1 of the Act states:
14. *"It is the duty of every public body and office holder, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions."*
15. This biodiversity duty is linked with, and elaborated by, the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy – *"Scotland's Biodiversity: It's in Your Hands"*. This strategy presents Scotland's response to its obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity and to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, along with the Scottish Ministers' desire to put biodiversity at the heart of our national identity and culture. The Act places a duty on Scottish Ministers to report to the Parliament on the implementation of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. As part of this report, public bodies including CNPA will be asked by Ministers about their progress in fulfilling their duty on the conservation of biodiversity.

The National Park and Cairngorms National Park Plan Context

16. The CNPA has a duty to ensure the delivery of the four Park aims in a co-ordinated manner. While the first aim specifically requires the conservation of the natural heritage, which of course includes biodiversity, the delivery of all four requires proper consideration of the Park's biodiversity if they are to be delivered in a manner that is sustainable.
17. The biodiversity duty is incorporated in the draft National Park Plan, which sets out clear policies for the conservation of the Park's habitats and species. The emerging

Priorities for Action includes a specific programme for “Conserving and Enhancing the Park’s Biodiversity and Landscapes” for implementation by all bodies as appropriate to their respective remits.

18. In delivering the four aims and the Park Plan, the CNPA and its partners must consider the local delivery of relevant UK and Scotland biodiversity targets, as well as those biodiversity priorities that are more particular to the Park.
19. Given our obligations towards biodiversity, the next consideration is how best to implement them.

The Delivery of Biodiversity in the Park

The Existing CLBAP

20. The CNPA and all other relevant public agencies in the Park have a shared responsibility to further the Park’s biodiversity. The CNPA in particular has a co-ordination and enabling role to ensure a coherent and consistent approach towards the delivery of all the four aims. This co-ordination role fits well with the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy agenda for action which requires increased integration between policies, programmes, actions and incentives across government to deliver coherent policy and incentives which enhance biodiversity. The existing Cairngorms LBAP partnership provides a sound platform from which to achieve such joined up action.
21. In particular, and as the result of the existing partnership approach, the CLBAP:
 - a) Has provided a clear statement, that is agreed by all partners, of the habitats and species that are important within the Park, and the issues affecting them. This statement is being used to identify species and habitats that are priorities for action, in accordance with criteria agreed by the partners;
 - b) Enables the partners to prepare SMART action plans for implementation, either singly or in association with other partners as befits the situation;
 - c) Is helping to inform the framing of Park Plan and Local Plan policies and objectives with respect to biodiversity implications;
 - d) Will be used increasingly as a common foundation from which to identify the required biodiversity outcomes from new and developing national/regional incentive schemes for agriculture, land management, forestry fishing and tourism, and will help partners to ensure that such incentives are properly co-ordinated rather than contradictory, and are focussed on the special needs of the Park;
 - e) Enables partners to have an agreed source of information from which to identify species and habitats requiring more specific and urgent actions that can be the subject of special projects;
 - f) Has identified species and habitats that need to be protected within the context of the Local Plan and within the development control functions of the CNPA and other Planning Authorities;

- g) Provides a sound and agreed basis from which to identify the relevant biodiversity matters that need to be taken into account in the relevant functions and activities of all public bodies within the Park;
- h) Provides the basis for the identification of a range of biological indicators as part of a comprehensive and cost-effective range of indicators for social engagement, effective biodiversity management, landscape scale biodiversity, ecosystem health and genetic diversity;
- i) Will enable the development of reporting protocols to monitor progress in achieving biodiversity objectives;
- j) Informs and helps to engage all interested parties within the Park's various communities about the importance of the Park's biodiversity and the opportunities for their involvement.
- k) Provides a common source of information on which to base interpretation and involvement, including the outreach work of Rangers.

The partnership approach

22. In the forward to the draft Cairngorms National Park Plan, the CNPA Convenor states that the Park Plan *"will shape the direction of the Park in the immediate future and for years to come. For the first time it will require the major public bodies operating in the area not only to talk with each other and co-operate together, but to plan openly – in advance and in a considerable degree of detail – how they will achieve the aims of the National Park"*. The existing CLBAP partnership is a ready made forum for the co-ordinated planning and delivery of biodiversity objectives and priorities, and their incorporation into other areas of work to promote sustainability. It is a unifying framework within which the partners can best achieve their joint biodiversity duties. Without this partnership there is a real danger that each public body, including CNPA would each identify their own biodiversity objectives and priorities, leading to duplication of effort, inefficient use of resources and the possibility of contradictory actions undermining progress.

Recommendation

23. **The co-ordination and enabling role of the CNPA is core to its functions. Accordingly it is recommended that CNPA remains at the heart of the CLBAP partnership to assist the efficient and effective achievement of the Park's biodiversity objectives set out in the four aims and the finalised Park Plan.**

The CLBAP Officer

24. Key to the success of the CLBAP has been the employment of an LBAP officer funded jointly by a number of the partners. This post has enabled an officer to be devoted to biodiversity planning on behalf of all the partners across the Park and wider area. None of the partner agencies has the capacity to do this on behalf of the others as part of their own staff complement. The employment of the project officer provides definite advantages over the employment of individual biodiversity staff by each separate body. The officer's work is directed by agreement through the

management and steering groups rather than by any individual organisation. This facilitates a unifying approach, and shared ownership and responsibility for the process. The post holder assists all the partners in achieving all the benefits of the CLBAP identified in section 3.1 above, in a coherent manner, and based upon a common approach and agreed priorities. This avoids duplication of effort and helps to pool resources in the most efficient manner. The prioritisation both informs, and is informed by, the emerging Park Plan objectives and actions.

25. Of particular importance is the ability of the post holder to engage with local communities. Part of the post holder's job plan is devoted to assisting these communities to become directly involved with the enjoyment and appreciation of biodiversity as one of the Park's special qualities. Communities are also supported in participating directly in its conservation and enhancement.
26. The key outcomes over the next 3 years are as follows:
 - a) Complete a review of the CLBAP plan to identify priority habitats/species for action in the Park, unifying UK, Scottish and local priorities of relevance. This will be done on behalf of, and with the agreement of all partners.
 - b) This review will provide a unified basis for informing biodiversity related decisions on the implementation of all other regional and national policies & strategies within the Park, including those for the development of effective Land Management Contracts.
 - c) Effective and co-ordinated delivery by partners of priorities for Action arising from the Park Plan, including targeted projects for species and habitats requiring particular actions beyond those connected with general land management.
 - d) Increased involvement of communities and visitors in the enjoyment and understanding of their local biodiversity, and more assistance in actions to promote all aspects of local biodiversity. Will use promotion of LBAP themes, Rangers, events, newsletter, leaflets, and press work.
 - e) Continuation of the biodiversity grant scheme led by the project officer, with especial emphasis on the involvement of local communities.
 - f) Development of several medium scale biodiversity projects with partners targeted at species requiring specific actions (like the Non-Native Fish or Upland Grain projects)
 - g) Assist in the development & implementation of 2 large scale projects on Cairngorms habitats and species (like the Water vole & butterfly projects)

Options for Delivery

Do Nothing

27. Given the obligations from Europe, Scotland and from the Park legislation and National Park Plan, it is untenable for the CNPA not to take part in the biodiversity process. This option is discounted accordingly.

Continue with biodiversity obligations but discontinue support to the CLBAP officer

28. If the CNPA discontinued support for the biodiversity officer, the functions of that post would have to be taken up by CNPA staff directly. The other partners would also have to take on the strategic biodiversity functions for themselves. This could require more combined funding from CNPA and the other partners overall to fulfil their biodiversity functions as individual organisations. Cessation of the collaborative approach would lose the efficiency and operational benefits derived from partnership support of the post, and would run counter to the CNPA's enabling and partnership approach to achieving the four aims.

Continue to support the partnership employment of a dedicated LBAP Officer

29. This would continue to capitalise upon the benefits of the established partnership. It shares the cost of the employment of the post, with each funding partner contributing in proportion to their stake in the Park. It provides a common base for the efficient co-ordination and delivery of the four aims in accord with each partner's biodiversity obligations. This approach best meets the challenge set by the CNPA Convenor in the Forward to the draft Park Plan.
30. The post could continue to be hosted by the CNPA or by another partner. The benefit of the CNPA hosting the project officer is the opportunity to have a leadership and promotional role in day to day implementation, very much in line with our enabling function. Furthermore, all other partners have areas of responsibility that extend well outwith the Park boundary. The CNPA is the only body that concentrates all its resources upon the Park. With this focus of activity, it makes sense for the CNPA to take on the role of managing the officer on behalf of the partnership.

Recommendation for delivery

31. **It is recommended that the CNPA continues to contribute to the employment of the CLBAP Officer for the period from November 2006 to the end of March 2010. The CNPA will also continue to host the officer and provide the support systems necessary for the effective employment of that post.**

Financial Implications

32. Funding for the LBAP Officer is provided by five public sector organisations reflecting the key Partners in the LBAP. The table below sets out the breakdown of funding for the post over the next three and half years:

Funder	2006/07 #	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10		Total	% split
SNH	6461	13310	13709	14121		47601	35%
CNPA	8676	17874	18410	18962		63922	47%
Aberdeenshire	1108	2282	2350	2421		8160	6%
Angus	1108	2282	2350	2421		8160	6%
Highland	1108	2282	2350	2421		8160	6%
Total	18461	38029	39170	40345		136004	100%

#funding for 2006/07 is for a 6 month period starting from October 2006.

33. The current Operational Plan for 2006-08 has a commitment of £8,000 and £18,000 for 2006/07 and 2007/08 respectively that will cover the projected costs. Further funds will be required from the CNPA in 2008/09 and 2009/10, and have to be allocated in the next Operational Plan.
34. A grant application to SNH in April 2006 for 35% matched funding was successful, and SNH agreed to provide financial support for two-and-a-half years until March 2009. SNH has indicated that funding at 35% will be made available in 2009/2010 subject to a further grant application. This is the maximum amount that SNH is able to offer in accordance with its national policy.
35. The three Local Authorities are providing funding in 2006/07 at the level set out above, and each has made a commitment in principle to provide financial support at a similar level in future years. Future commitments are made on a yearly basis subject to approval by the relevant Committee in each Local Authority.
36. The above costs are based on the continuation of the current funding structure. The Management Group will, however, be investigating the possibility of including more funding partners from amongst other steering group members. If successful this could reduce the financial input from CNPA. The costs also include an honorarium for the independent Convenor. This amounts to £750 per annum plus mileage. The Convenor is a self employed environmental consultant and broadcaster, and the honorarium enables him to be able to devote time to the CLBAP process in competition with earning a living from private contracts. The independent Convenor helps to ensure that no one partner dominates the proceedings of the CLBAP. He is also able to take an impartial line in the evaluation of proposals and actions from the partners. The Convenor chairs four management group meetings and 2 steering group meetings a year, and also attends other events as beneficial to the CLBAP process.
37. The costs attached to the hosting of the post have been calculated to be equivalent to about £15, 000 per annum. These have been calculated on the basis of how much it would cost the LBAP project if it had to absorb its share of the CNPA's core costs for the support of 50 full time employees.

38. In addition to the support of the Officer post, the CNPA has a budget of £20,000 towards the biodiversity grant scheme; £30,000 towards the RaptorWatch partnership over 3 years; an in-kind contribution of up to £10,000 per annum for the Water Vole Conservation Project Officer (principally for travel and subsistence costs for the officer based in CNPA Offices); up to £15,000 for the in-bye farmland habitat survey of Strathspey; about £5,000 for the next two years towards people counters for research into disturbance effects on capercaillie, plus smaller sums for leaflets etc.

Beyond 2010

39. While the LBAP process is called a project, the LBAP duties and related Park Plan actions will steer the work of the CNPA and other relevant public bodies well into the future. Accordingly it is difficult to foresee a time when the benefits derived from a partnership approach to biodiversity action in the Park will cease. During the course of the period up to 2010, the partners will examine the ongoing requirement for the partnership and possible mechanisms for placing the project on a more permanent footing.

Consultation

40. This paper was drawn up with the involvement of the Cairngorms LBAP Management Group and members of the Cairngorms LBAP Steering Group (see annex 1 for a membership list). The CNPA Management Team discussed and commented on a draft of this paper.

Policy Context

41. The CLBAP is relevant to all 5 strategic themes with theme 1 and 2 being the key areas where it will deliver.
42. The CLBAP has a fundamental role in assisting with the delivery of many of the policies and actions included in the Park and Local Plans.
43. The CLBAP helps deliver on awareness, understanding and inclusion for local people and visitors.
44. Assists with the CNPA's contribution to the EU, UK & Scottish biodiversity strategies, Forward Strategy for Scottish Agriculture, Scottish Forestry Strategy, Scottish Rural Development Plan, Local Green Space Strategy, Best Value.

Delivering Sustainability

45. The CLBAP will ensure that all partners are able to take a consistent approach towards the biodiversity implications of all their functions with respect to farming, forestry, moorland management, water, sporting activities, recreation and development. This will help to ensure that all economic activity is undertaken in a sustainable manner.

Delivering a Park for All

46. Many CLBAP actions are about involving communities and visitors in conserving/understanding/appreciating their local biodiversity irrespective of their background.

Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency

47. The CLBAP partnership allows the pooling of resources to achieve the best economic approach to achieving collective biodiversity obligations towards the Park. Without the partnership, each would have to spend more of their own resources on devising an individual approach to biodiversity with the risk of duplication and the possibility of conflicting priorities and actions. The partnership approach increases consistency and effectiveness as all are working from a common understanding of the biodiversity issues to be addressed. This is very much in line with Government's efficiency agenda.

Conclusion

48. **The co-ordination and enabling role of the CNPA is core to its functions. Accordingly it is recommended that CNPA remains at the heart of the CLBAP partnership to assist the efficient achievement of the Park's biodiversity objectives set out in the four aims and the finalised Park Plan.**
49. **It is recommended that the CNPA continues to contribute to the employment of the CLBAP Officer for the period from November 2006 to the end of March 2010. The CNPA will also continue to host the officer and provide the support systems necessary for the effective employment of that post.**

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June 2006

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