

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: THE LANDSCAPE FRAMEWORK

Prepared by: Frances Thin, Landscape Adviser
Matthew Hawkins, Senior Heritage Officer

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to update the board on the progress of the landscape framework since the last discussion on the project in August 2008.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- a) Note the progress on the Landscape Framework.
- b) Agree the outline process and outputs.
- c) Note the request for the information of a Board Advisory Group.

Executive Summary

The paper outlines current activity towards delivering the Landscape Framework. It discusses development of the methodology since August 2008 and the development of supporting work such as the Geodiversity Audit and the Landscape Character Assessment.

The Framework will be of use for land managers, conservationists, recreation users and the general public. Communication outcomes will also be of value to the CNPA including our commitments under the European Landscape Convention.

The project will be done in several stages, including gathering base line information for a spatial model which will then be used for an engagement process, in line with the National Park Plan and Local Development Plan process. Information will then be gathered from this to form a draft Landscape Framework which will then be consulted upon before finalising it.

The project outputs will be both spatial (including GIS) and communication. The exact nature will be in part determined by the results of the engagement process. The timescale for the project takes us to the end of March 2012 in line with the original programme.

THE LANDSCAPE FRAMEWORK – FOR INFORMATION

Introduction

1. The purpose of this paper is to update the board on the progress of the landscape framework since the last discussion on the project in August 2008. Since then the project has proceeded on two main areas. Firstly, in developing the methodology for the project and secondly, in undertaking a series of further baseline studies required.
2. The completion of the Landscape Management plan, now known as the Landscape framework, is identified as a key objective in the current Park Plan (number 1 under 6.1 Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity and Landscapes; Priority for Action 1a) and in CNPA's corporate plan.
3. The methodology and project plan was initially developed by David Tyldesley associates in March 2009. This external work was required due to workload from the Local Plan inquiry. This resulted in an outline project methodology and programme. This work has been taken further by Frances since her arrival in August and this paper sets out her methodology development to date.
4. In addition to this work we have been undertaking a number of additional pieces of work that will form important baseline information for the framework. These include:
 - a) The Landscape Character Assessment (LCA); This is a detailed assessment for the landscapes of the CNP. It follows on from the twelve year old SNH study currently in use. However it looks at the landscape of the park in greater detail. This is required for the purposes of planning as well as the framework. The project is currently underway and will be finished in November this year.
 - b) Geodiversity Audit: this is being undertaken in partnership with the British Geological Survey. They will be utilising their extensive knowledge of the CNP as well as some additional field work to produce an overall audit of the important geological and geomorphological features of the CNP area. This will be completed by the end of March 2010.

Application

5. There is widespread acceptance that a landscape framework would be useful, however the understanding of what a landscape framework might constitute is not necessarily consistent amongst staff and board members, nor probably the Park Plan partners. Given this context, the complexity of the exercise and the resource implications, it is worth spelling out some outcomes.
6. The positive outcomes are twofold, and are derived directly from the Landscape Framework as an agreed spatial tool, and indirectly from the related communication benefits. The outcomes will in themselves add value, and in some cases will also meet a legislative requirement (for example for the European Landscape Convention and NSA management strategies).

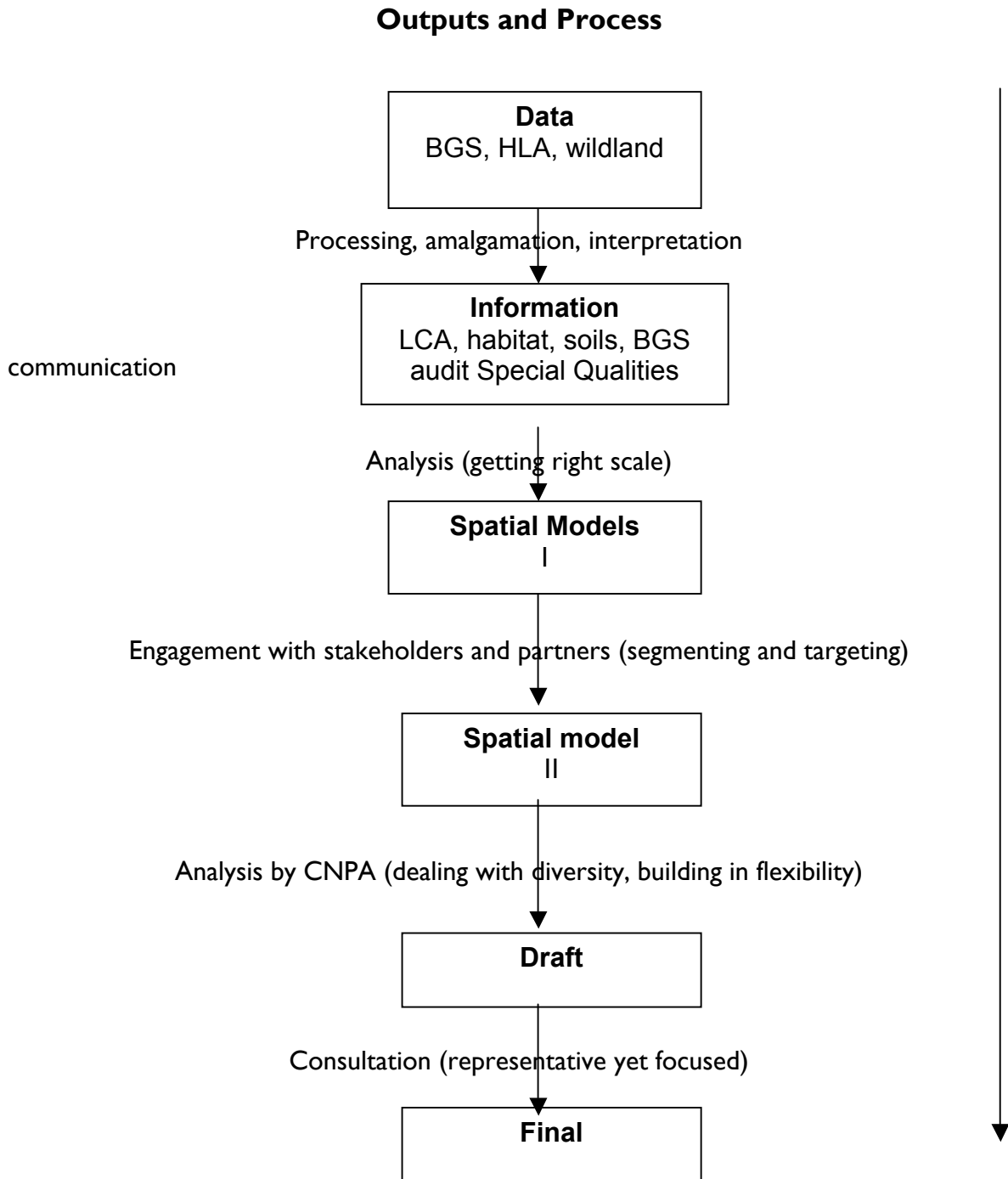
7. It is important to be aware that there is also a risk of undesirable outcomes such as slipping into the '*subjectivity versus objectivity*', or the '*whose landscape is it anyway?*' debates. We also need to avoid the problems encountered by having an overly general approach, or by outputs being too long and unwieldy. The desired outputs of this exercise shall be practical. This is about building a framework to help decision-making, hone down options and optimise public benefits.

Some Spatial Outcomes

8. For the land use planner and adviser:
 - a) It will be a spatial tool that can be applied strategically for adapting, designing or directing initiatives that might bring about land use change e.g. to help SRDP criteria target specific landscape features and special qualities.
 - b) It will be a spatial tool for planning actions to counter/respond to climate change such as flood control, soil conservation and woodland creation and management, in a way that public benefits are maximised.
9. For the individual farmer, crofter and estate manager:
 - a) It will aid planning and the identification of options and actions appropriate to gain public benefit.
 - b) Help to identify rural business opportunities based on a relationship between people and their perception of place, such as ecotourism and wildland experiences.
10. For the developer:
 - a) It will provide the cues for what is appropriate in a particular landscape and aid sensitive location, siting and design. It cannot provide detailed guidance for every form of development in every location, but it can provide the where with all to help sieve out inappropriate locations. It can also give the context and focus for possible subsequent detailed guidance.
11. Communication Outcomes:
 - a) CNPA and many others use landscape all the time as a communication and marketing tool. The processes involved in building the Landscape Framework will give us a better understanding of what people (from all communities of interest) value and how they value it, and an ability to link that improved understanding to our conserving and enhancing actions.
 - b) It will give us better tools for ongoing dialogue and the development of Landscape Quality Objectives (a requirement of the ELC).
12. It is a fact that landscapes constantly evolve and that consequently change is inevitable. The focus for the Framework is how change can be best managed so as to meet the aims of the park. This will be a framework for flexibility, not a rigid blueprint.

Process

13. The following flowchart identifies the outputs (in boxes), processes (on arrows) and the key challenges (in brackets).



14. Whilst we can learn from established processes and the experience of others, this process will be designed and fine-tuned to meet the requirements and circumstances of the CNP. The process of engagement will be a major exercise with a range of tools and techniques being used to garner responses from different audiences and stakeholder groups. The different groups are likely to be the public, the conservation, land management and recreation communities. We will look to use existing mechanisms (e.g. the delivery groups, Cairngorms Business Partnership) and forums (e.g. CDAG, Farmers Forum, LOAF) as much as possible. As far as possible we shall employ methods that reflect people's experience of landscape possibly including 3-d representations, images and creative productions, re-photography, recollections, presentations and spoken word. The word landscape may not feature at all in some of these interactions. We will look to test-bed tools of engagement internally.
15. It is envisaged that the next National Park Plan 2012-17 will set out a clear land use strategy within it, focusing on the public benefits and services delivered through land use. The Landscape Framework will provide a spatial articulation of how that strategy relates to the special qualities and management needs of particular areas within the Park. The public engagement on the landscape framework will be an integral part of the engagement process for the National Park Plan and Local Development Plan.

Outputs

16. It is difficult to be absolutely precise about the products from this exercise because the results of the engagement and consultation exercises will, to a large extent, determine how the product(s) will look. However, it is likely that they will be catchment based with LCA areas nesting within them, enabling interpretation at a range of scales. As far as is possible outputs will be incorporated into the GIS system,
17. What will this look like? The outputs may look very different from the tools used for engaging different stakeholders and partners. They may include:
 - a) An introduction that includes a short landscape statement for the Cairngorms
 - b) A consideration of how landscape relates to the 4 aims of the park
 - c) Map-based information identifying areas with associated objectives and priorities at a number of different scales. These will be areas that make sense in terms of the natural factors that determine the nature of the landscape, areas that make sense in terms of the past, current and future management of that land and areas that make sense in terms of the human experience of that landscape.
18. The development of the Landscape Framework is set out in section 4.0 below. It will be delivered by the end of March 2012 in line with the current National park Plan priority for action.