

# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## FOR DISCUSSION

**Title:                   LOW CARBON CAIRNGORMS**

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### **Purpose**

To outline the proposed approach to take forward the low carbon National Park aspiration agreed by the board and consider the short and longer-term actions.

### **Recommendations**

That the board consider the scope of low carbon work set out and provide guidance on a realistic set of short-term actions proposed and longer-term development of low carbon work programmes.

### **Executive Summary**

The Board set out a clear desire in July 2009 to establish a focus on becoming a low carbon National Park. This headline ambition would serve as a focus for climate change mitigation activity in the Park, and around which to co-ordinate the work of partners.

The mid-term review of the National Park Plan and the Strategy Group identified climate change as a key change in context and drivers for our work since preparation of the National Park Plan to which we must respond. The scope of low carbon work is potentially very wide and cuts across many sectors. There is also a range of work already underway through existing priorities.

This paper therefore sets out short-term actions (2010-12) that can realistically be delivered through the current National Park Plan and within current resource constraints; and identifies the need to use these two years of developing the next National Park Plan to work up with partners a fuller programme of low carbon work that can be delivered and resourced accordingly through the next plan from 2012.

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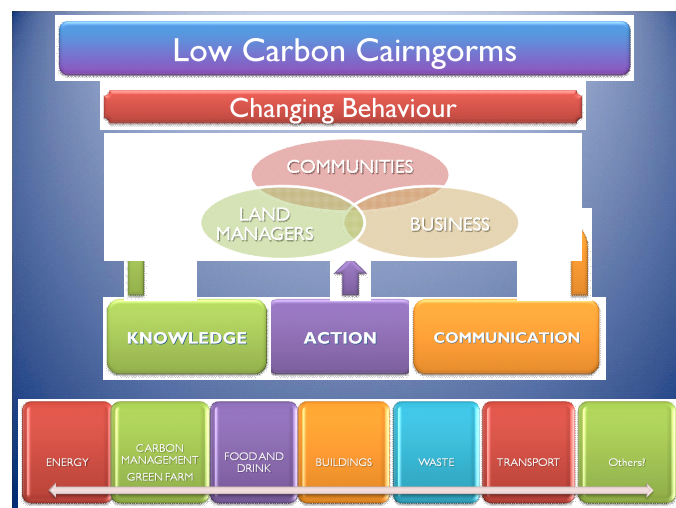
## LOW CARBON CAIRNGORMS - FOR DISCUSSION

### Background

1. In July 2009 the Board gave a strong steer towards setting a clear ambition for the Cairngorms to be a low carbon National Park – as a headline ambition around which to focus action and garner the support of partners. That ambition is set in a clear national context outlined in the accompanying paper on the Climate Change (Scotland) Act and the national delivery plan. These place new duties on the CNPA and set targets which should drive our work on climate change in the National Park.
2. Since that board discussion, officers have been considering how best to pursue the low carbon Cairngorms ambition. The board recognised during that discussion that this is a long-term ambition which needs an ongoing programme of work. We have therefore considered the scope of low carbon work and the short and long-term focus for making progress.
3. Low Carbon Cairngorms is not the sum of all climate change work in the Park, but it does provide the focus for mitigation work. There remain other aspects of work on adaptation to climate change, for example habitat network development and business adaptation that fall outwith the low carbon ambition, but will continue to be pursued through the National Park Plan.

### Scope of Low Carbon Cairngorms

4. The over-arching focus of our work on a low carbon National Park is on changing behaviour. It is only through changes in behaviour of individuals, communities, businesses and government that significant reductions in carbon emissions can be secured. Underneath this top level goal, there are a series of interest groups, themes and topic areas that cover a potentially wide scope of activity. The diagram below sets out the potential scope of low carbon work.



5. This model is simply to set out a framework that will be developed further through engagement for the next National Park Plan. In the meantime, we have considered how to take this forward in the short term.
6. **Short term** – this is defined as the next two financial years, 2010/11 and 2011/12, being the remaining two years of current National Park Plan delivery. In this period, there is already a focus of low carbon work being delivered through the existing

National Park Plan and the emerging Local Plan. Constraints including finance and staff capacity within CNPA and partners limit the ability to deliver entirely new workstreams within this period.

7. **Longer term** – this is defined as the next National Park Plan period, 2012-17. Development of the next plan and the Local Development Plan over the coming two years gives the opportunity to shape up a more comprehensive approach to delivering a low carbon National Park with a clear focus, priority and associated commitment for the five years from 2012 onwards.

### **Actions in the Short-term**

8. The table at Annex I shows the key actions proposed in the short-term. These are actions that build on the existing delivery of the National Park Plan and Local Plan and are achievable in terms of CNPA and partner resources and commitment over the next two years. They do not seek to cover the full potential scope of low carbon work shown in the diagram above, but focus on realistic actions in the short-term. In addition to delivering specific actions we intend to use this period to lay the groundwork and develop a wider programme of activity that will be delivered through the next National Park Plan and Local Development Plan. We will begin to engage partners and communities on the next plan in the spring of 2010, so there will be a clear process and context in which to develop the low carbon approach and a clear way for ideas generated to be taken forward.
9. One of the highlights of the short-term actions is a proposed conference in 2010 on the role of National Parks in contributing to Scotland's climate change targets. This is envisaged as a key event in the development of the next National Park Plan and Local Development Plan – it would provide a focus for:
  - a) Bringing together existing threads of low carbon work and spotting opportunities for better synergy and co-ordination;
  - b) Analysing the potential contribution of the National Park to the Scottish Government's climate change delivery plan;
  - c) Generating and scoping ideas to inform the National Park Plan;
  - d) Raising awareness and enthusiasm for the opportunity for the National Park to be a leading light in how rural Scotland can contribute to national climate change efforts.
10. It is intended that this would be a high profile event that would attract national level speakers and participants, as well as a focus for more local connection. Planning for the event is currently in the early stages with key partners.
11. Climate change targets and the low carbon National Park ambition will also now become a key driver in our decision making on priorities and policy decisions. In carrying out the mid-term review of the National Park Plan, climate change has influenced the identification of priorities over the next two years and future decisions coming to the Board will include reference to their contribution to climate change targets (most likely through reference in the 'sustainability' section below) in order to ensure that this is a clear and transparent factor in decision making.

### **Reporting on progress**

12. We propose to report progress on the Low Carbon Cairngorms ambition through the existing reporting on corporate and National Park Plans. Although it is not a separate priority for action in the National Park Plan, many of the component actions will be reported through the usual reports. An additional theme report

added to these reports will contribute an overview across National Park Plan delivery on this key national ambition, to provide a more transparent way in which the board can keep an overview of CNPA's contribution to the duties and targets of the Climate Change Act.

### **Consultation**

13. The development of the short-term actions proposed are the result of discussion with partners through the mid-term review of the National Park Plan and existing partnership projects – notably with the Soil Association, Macaulay Institute, UHI, Scottish Enterprise, Forestry Commission, Highland Council and Aberdeenshire Council.

### **Policy Context**

14. The overall policy context of the Climate Change Act is set out in the accompanying board paper. The Mid-term Review of the National Park Plan and the meeting of the Strategy Group in July identified climate change as one of the most significant changes in context and new drivers for decision making since the National Park Plan was prepared, and identified a need for CNPA and partners to respond to this in their delivery of the current plan.

### **Delivering Sustainability**

15. **Contribution towards climate change targets** – this paper sets out the approach for taking forward work around the low carbon National Park ambition in the context of national climate change obligations. It proposes that this section of future board papers be used to identify any effect future decisions may have on contributing towards national climate change targets.

### **Delivering A Park for All**

16. There are no direct implications on A Park for All.

### **Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency**

17. The paper sets out a way to address the increased driver of climate change in a way that is compatible with our existing resource base and budgets. The low carbon ambition should be a key factor in considering the efficiency and effectiveness of future decisions, shaping the prioritisation of workload through the current National Park Plan and the content of the next plan and Local Development Plan.

### **Implications**

#### **Financial Implications**

18. The financial implications of the short-term actions will be addressed within the parameters of the current year's budget and operational planning for 2010/11 and 2011/12. In most cases there are already budgets identified for the proposed actions on which CNPA will lead, and the prioritisation of these actions along with others through the mid-term review will influence the distribution of budgets in the forthcoming operational plan.

#### **Presentational Implications**

19. The proposed approach gives a way for CNPA to set out and report clearly on climate change work as an identifiable package of work. The low carbon ambition gives a clear focus to raise the profile of this work and the associated opportunities for partners. Equally, we must manage expectations, particularly on what can be

delivered over the next two years. Setting out a clear set of achievable actions for 2010-12 should help to do this.

***Implications for Stakeholders***

20. In the same way that the mid-term review of the National Park Plan provides a focus for partners for the remaining two years of delivery, so this set of short-term actions provides a focus. By co-ordinating this work around the headline low carbon Cairngorms ambition, it offers a way for partners to raise the profile of their low carbon work within the Park and promote their contribution to national targets through the Park.

**Next Steps**

21. Reports of progress will be brought to the climate change sessions of future Board meetings.

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