
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: CAIRNGORMS LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

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Purpose

To update the Board on progress with the revised Local Biodiversity Action Plan and the new LBAP Partnership for the National Park. Also to obtain Board approval to proceed with the proposed process for completing the LBAP review and to make the working draft widely available for comment.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- a) Agree the proposed process for completing the LBAP review
- b) That the Board approve the proposed make up of the new LBAP partnership

Executive Summary

The Cairngorms National Park is widely regarded as the most important area in the UK for nature conservation, and is internationally significant. The conservation of this biodiversity is of paramount importance not just for wildlife but for the whole range of ecosystem services upon which we depend, not least for healthy recreation, sustaining land based businesses, tourism and quality of life for both visitors and residents.

This paper provides an update on the current working draft of the Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan (Annex 1) and seeks the Board's approval for the next steps towards launching both the new plan and the new Partnership intended to drive it forward. The plan as it has been drafted has been subject to consultation with a range of partners and species experts. The focus of the plan is on habitat enhancements, in particular woodlands and wetlands.

CAIRNGORMS LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN – FOR DECISION

Introduction

1. The CNPA Board approved the process for reviewing the existing Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) in January 2012 and for setting up a new “Wildlife Partnership” to oversee the delivery of the plan and lead on generating wider interests in biodiversity conservation in the National Park (October 2011). This paper introduces the main action points evolving from the draft LBAP for Board approval and outlines the intended process for setting up the new partnership and launching the new LBAP.

The New LBAP

2. The new LBAP has been drafted to update a plan that is now 10 years old. While the original plan is still of relevance, the new plan will provide a focus for targeted delivery for the next 5 years. It has been written to take account of the principles adopted by the CNPA Board in the meeting on 20th January 2012. There are four main overall objectives presented in the draft (Annex 1) which also reflect the National Park Partnership Plan 2012-17:
 - a) Enhance woodland and wetland habitat networks
 - b) Improve the quality of existing habitats
 - c) Identify and maintain important, non-designated sites for biodiversity
 - d) Implement focused conservation action for a small group of key species
3. The focus is on enhancing habitat (in particular woodland and wetland) rather than dwelling mainly on individual species. The emphasis on ecosystems and habitat is also underlined by the fact that land managers operating on a ‘landscape scale’ undertake most of the conservation management for biodiversity.
4. The Biodiversity Officers have consulted widely with experts in different species groups: mammals, birds, invertebrates and plants in order to identify the species that are of most significance in the National Park and most greatly valued by people. This work has highlighted over 1,000 important species. Further work is on going to refine this list to a small number of species that require particular action in the next 5 years.
5. The working draft LBAP is provided in Annex 1, specific actions and targets are being refined in consultation with a range of partners. NB The draft contains an

overview of chapters 4-8 only. An example of the work done with local experts on important moth and butterfly species is attached to Annex 2

The New LBAP Partnership

6. The CNPA Board have already agreed the principle of setting up a new partnership for leading on the delivery of the LBAP. Strategically this will fit alongside bodies like the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust and the Cairngorms Business Partnership and will allow greater collaboration and co-ordination on the delivery of biodiversity conservation across the National Park.
7. The outgoing LBAP Management Group in June 2012 agreed proposals for setting up the LBAP Partnership. In the short term, the partnership will be hosted and administered by CNPA, but in the longer term there is potential for it to become a separate body such as a charitable trust. It has been proposed by the LBAP management group that the new partnership be named **Cairngorms Nature**; the new Partnership will need to approve this.
8. The functions of the proposed new LBAP Partnership are to:
 - a) provide a new and strong leadership in the delivery of the LBAP
 - b) engage a wide partnership in nature conservation
 - c) co-ordinate and keep an overview of the management of conservation projects
 - d) inspire community involvement in local conservation projects
 - e) receive donations and funding from a range of sources
 - f) administer grant funding
9. The management structure has also been agreed by the LBAP management Group and is shown in figure 1 below. The intention is for a small tight knit, dedicated Management Group consisting of organisations all with a specific role in biodiversity conservation. Scottish Land and Estates (SLE) provide a crucial link with landowners in the NP, without whom the delivery of the LBAP would be impossible. Both RSPB and NTS have an explicit conservation remit and both are owners of significant land-holdings in the National Park. The Dee Fisheries Trust (DFT) put themselves forward as a body keen to inject energy and enthusiasm on all biodiversity matters, but particularly aquatic. Their innovative approach to project development and securing funding shown with the “Pearls in Peril Project” will be a welcome addition to the partnership. In all cases, it is important that the individuals selected by each body are enthused and dedicated to the conservation of biodiversity. It is proposed that initially CNPA chair the new Partnership.

Financial Implications

10. Currently, there are two Biodiversity Officers on a job share basis (one full-time permanent post) and the CNPA is committed to funding the 'Wildlife Partnership Manager' (three-year fixed-term full-time post). The partnership will seek to bring in additional funding from other sources to enable delivery of the LBAP. Part of the 'Wildlife Partnership Manager' role will be to help source additional funding.

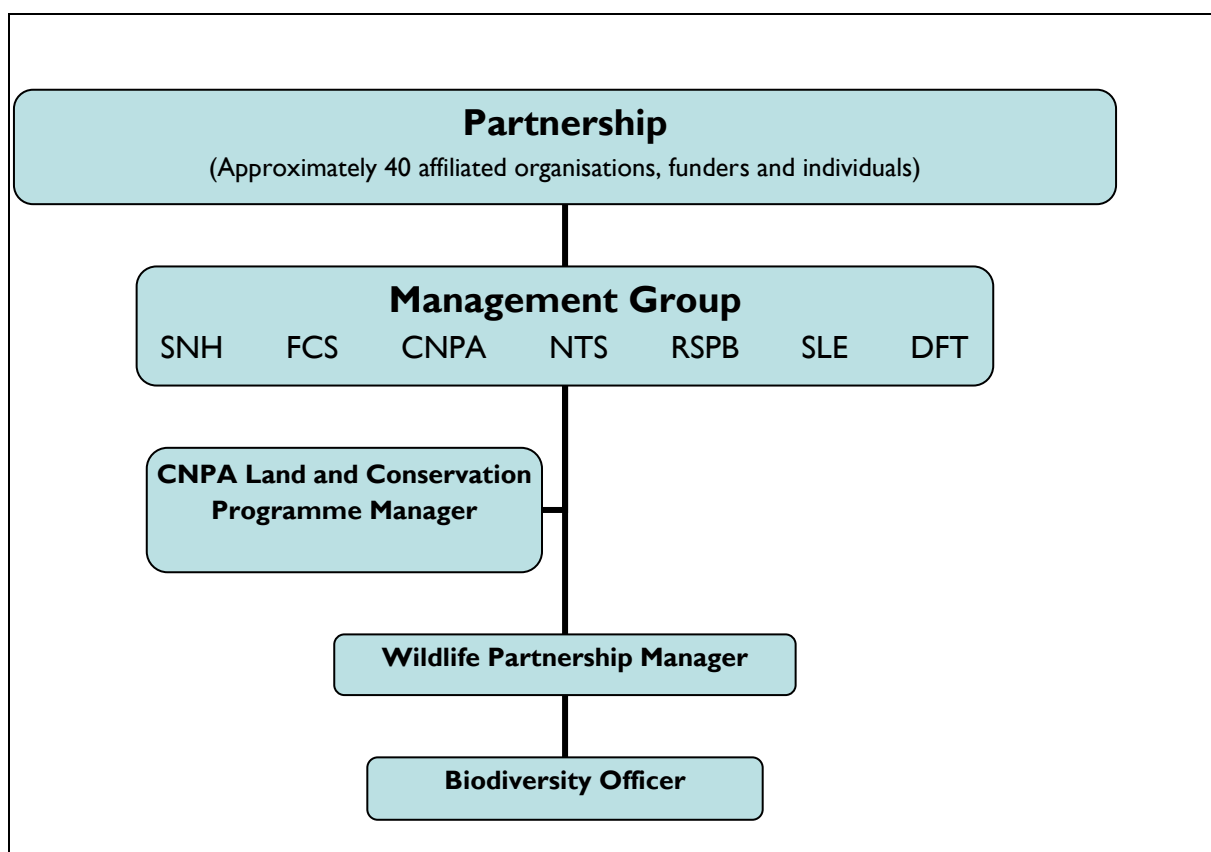


Figure 1. The proposed structure of the New LBAP Wildlife Partnership
(SNH= Scottish Natural Heritage, FCS = Forestry Commission Scotland, NTS = National Trust for Scotland, RSPB = Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, SLE= Scottish Land and Estates, DFB = Dee Fisheries Trust)

Next Steps

11. The following table sets out the key steps to be taken leading to complete the review and launch the new LBAP and "Wildlife Partnership".

Key steps	Proposed date
Board approval of the current working draft LBAP	31 st Aug 2012
First meeting of the new Partnership	27 th Sept 2012
Continued engagement with key individuals and groups	Ongoing – Nov
Working draft LBAP published on the CNPA website, with requests for specific comments	Oct – Nov 2012

Second meeting of the partnership	Late Nov 2012
Publication on 10 year Review of existing LBAP drafted	Nov – Dec 2012
CNPA Board approve final LBAP	21 st Dec 2012
Launch Partnership and new LBAP	Mar 2013

Consultation

12. A considerable amount of consultation work with groups of biodiversity experts has been undertaken already by the Biodiversity Officers to draw up the plan and to develop the habitat and species actions. This work will continue over the next 2 months and bring in a wider range of partners (including communities) to finalise the actions and targets within the plan. The draft LBAP will be placed on the CNPA website in late October to allow anyone with an interest to view the plan along with a short questionnaire for comments. It is not envisaged that any significant issues will come out of the questionnaires given the extent of the consultation work done by the Biodiversity officers, though there is still scope to make modifications to the draft if required. A response to the questionnaires will be published.

Recommendations

13. That the Board:
- a) Agree the proposed process for completing the LBAP review
 - b) Approve the proposed make up of the new LBAP partnership

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