

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: DELIVERING THE CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE THROUGH THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK

Prepared by: Claire Ross, Community Support and Education Programme Manager

Purpose:

This paper is to update Board Members on the work that has been done in delivering the Curriculum for Excellence through the Cairngorms National Park in partnership with a wide range of partners and outlines the next phase of delivery (2012-2015).

Recommendations

That the Board

- a) Note the extensive work that has been carried out in delivering the Curriculum for Excellence through the Cairngorms National Park since the last update (October 2010)
- b) Agrees to the proposed work package that will continue this work 2012-2015

Executive Summary

The place of outdoor learning and the role of Scotland's National Parks is clearly endorsed by a wide range of partners including the Scottish Government. It supports and enhances all curricular areas and contexts for learning. This paper outlines the considerable amount of work that has been done since the 2010 guidance document "*Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor learning*" to promote both Scottish National Parks as ideal places to develop more "active citizens" who demonstrate a connection with and understanding of nature and all its life enhancing elements.

The paper also highlights that going forward it is key to ensure that the work that has been delivered in education, particularly through the Outdoor Learning in National Parks project, is embedded in the partner organisations' day to day operations.

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Background

Curriculum for Excellence

1. The Curriculum for Excellence (C for E) aims to achieve a transformation in education in Scotland by providing a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum from 3 to 18 years. It is underpinned by the values inscribed on the mace of the Scottish Parliament - wisdom, justice, compassion and integrity. The purpose of Curriculum for Excellence is outlined in the four capacities: to enable each child or young person to be a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor.

Context

2. In July 2010 the CNPA Board agreed to develop an approach to education that “works with partners to develop a co-ordinated approach to education with a main emphasis on Outdoor Learning but with the flexibility to work with other specific projects that directly deliver the National Park Plan”
3. This approach is reaffirmed in the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan which states that it will:
“Continue to develop and support outdoor learning in National Parks through the Curriculum for Excellence in schools near the Park and throughout Scotland.”(10a p.64)

“Support schemes such as the John Muir Award and the Cairngorms Junior Rangers to provide structured ways of developing skills and knowledge based around the Park”
(10b p.65)

Progress so Far in Delivering the Curriculum of Excellence through the Cairngorms National Park

Partnerships

4. There has been a significant amount of activity generated through the partnership approach that highlights the benefits of using and promoting the National Parks as an ideal destination for outdoor learning. Key outputs have been:
 - a) The Outdoor learning in National Parks project bringing together twelve partners: both Scottish National Parks, seven of the eight local authorities covering the Parks, SNH, FCS and Education Scotland. This delivery model has been widely seen as best practice and is been recommended by Education Scotland as one for others to emulate.

- b) The partnership with the John Muir Trust extends back to October 2003. Since that time the John Muir Award has gone from strength to strength in the Cairngorms. Over the partnership period John Muir Award resources have been CNP branded to further enhanced the awareness raising of the Cairngorms National Park to John Muir Award participants. The John Muir Award is now a nationally recognised award that is used throughout the UK and is held up as best practice by Education Scotland, the John Muir Award work in the Cairngorms has contributed to this recognition.
 - c) In 2009 the CNPA hosted the EUROPARC Junior Ranger Scheme with 48 rangers from eleven countries attending. This kick started the Cairngorms Junior Ranger project which is delivered by a wide range of partners (eleven) including ranger services, SNH and the RSPB.
 - d) Education and Outdoor learning has been an area where we have worked extremely successfully in partnership with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. The Scottish National Parks worked jointly to establish the base line evidence that provided the impetus for the Outdoor Learning in National Parks Project resulting in a wide range of collaborative projects that include:
 - i. Annual Residential Exchange visit for National Parks (for both teachers and pupils open to schools throughout Scotland)
 - ii. Joint media project (2011 examples of best practice in Outdoor Learning in both Parks)
 - iii. Educational materials to support school visits to NNRs in both Parks
 - iv. Joint media coverage in educational sector publications
 - v. Joint workshops and presentations to teachers and other education providers (nationally, regionally and locally)
5. The full list of what has been delivered in the past three years is extensive see annex one for a full list of activities that have been delivered.

What Impact has the CNPA's Education Work Had?

6. The impacts of the educational work are hard to evaluate as so many factors can be involved and impacts often are long term and expressed anecdotally, but there are some measures/indicators of real progress.
- a) Four out of the five local authorities that cover the CNP now have Outdoor Learning strategy groups that are generating outdoor learning opportunities for school children across the curriculum, and are utilising on a regular basis the National Park. In Highland, Angus and Aberdeenshire where these groups have really taken root the increase in Outdoor learning activity has increased considerably during the life time of the Outdoor learning in National Parks project:

- i. In Highland recorded residential visits in the Park are up by 36%, adventurous activities by 26%
 - ii. In Aberdeenshire numbers of pupils involved in outdoor learning in the Park was up by 30%
 - iii. In Angus the number of visits to the National Park from schools was up by 25%
 - iv. CNP ranger contacts with young people have increased by 175%
 - v. Perth and Kinross Council have recently recruited three outdoor learning officers that are working closely with the National Parks.
7. Since 2003, 15,502 people have achieved a John Muir Award through the CNPA. Over 500 teachers, youth workers and outdoor instructors have received training in its use this “training the trainers “ approach is equivalent to having 4 fte staff delivering the John Muir Award for CNPA.
8. Raising awareness of the Cairngorms National Park and how it can help to deliver the Curriculum for Excellence has been a key strand to the CNPA’s education work. The main ways of raising the Park’s profile has been through:
 - a) Continual Professional Development training (CPD) for teachers and other outdoor education providers (rangers etc) over 500 have benefitted from direct support.
 - b) Two high profile National Outdoor Learning in National Parks conferences, that have been well attended (150 participants at Glenmore Lodge) received excellent reviews and have been fully endorsed by the Scottish Government with the attendance of Mike Russell (Cabinet Secretary for Education and Life Long Learning)
 - c) Several case studies have been developed highlighting best practice using the National Park as an outdoor learning resource, posted on the Education Scotland website.
 - d) The Cairngorms Learning Zone, a website resource for secondary schools covering all aspects of the Cairngorms National Park.
9. Finally the Outdoor learning in National parks has been recognised as a “best practice” approach to partnership working at a national level. Dr Alasdair Allan, Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland’s Languages stated in his forward to the projects annual report that:

“This successful partnership project with Scotland’s National Parks has provided a suite of effective approaches to engage with children and young people in the natural beauty that is such a fabulous resource in these unique landscapes. Whether the opportunities come from living in or close to the Parks, from travelling to them, or learning in their own local landscapes supported by resources from NPs, the experiences are helping to develop each of the four capacities in our children and young people”.

Recommendation

- 10. That the Board note the extensive work that has been carried out in delivering the Curriculum for Excellence through the Cairngorms National Park since the last update (October 2010) and its impacts.**

Next Steps

11. The Outdoor Learning in National Parks project (2010-2012) has been extremely successful and has been a high impact vehicle for promoting National Parks in Scotland as excellent places to deliver the C for E. The steering group (made up of all twelve partners) wish to continue the project until September 2013. There have been some challenges mainly due to major restructuring in most of the partner organisations that has slowed down progress in some areas, and has hindered a consistent approach at times. It is because of this that the partners wish to extend the support of the Development Officer to ensure that the project leaves a clear legacy.
12. The key role of the CNPA in our approach in delivering the Curriculum for Excellence has been in bringing key partners together, creating a framework that has seen a high level of delivery from a modest input and that has clear benefits for all involved in delivering a shared outcome (C for E). Part of the process is to be able to then let others take the work forward.
13. The final stage of the Outdoor learning in National Parks project will focus on:
- a) Promoting more effectively the educational materials that have been produced through the project: films from the media project, NNR resources, and updated “Get into National Parks” resource pack, outdoor learning case studies etc.
 - b) Creating a three year “legacy” action plan to ensure that key activities (i.e. the CPD work) and initiatives started by the project will continue (but with the local authorities taking a lead role)
 - c) Maintaining the steering group of the project to meet periodically and ensure that the “legacy” action plan is on track.
14. The CNPA will also continue to support key flagship projects such as the: John Muir Award, maintaining the number of young people achieving the award and making sure that the high standard remains. Also the building on the success of the Junior Ranger project broadening the experience out to all the local authorities in the Park.

15. In addition to the continued promotion of outdoor learning in National Parks there is also an intention to continue to deliver education activities with schools through the “Food for Life” project and to build on the IMBY (In my back yard) Planning Aid Scotland project working with young people to raise awareness around the planning process.
16. Looking forward there are other areas linked to education that we are currently looking to explore:
 - a) Skills Development and Training, the CNPA have recently taken on an intern to research how the CNPA might support effective delivery of skills development and training in the Park. A paper will come to the CNPA Board in the near future with the findings and recommendations from this research.
 - b) Volunteering, also highlighted in the National Park Partnership Plan, Park Officers are currently exploring with potential partners the best way to take forward this work.
17. These new areas have clear links to the education and outdoor learning work that the CNPA has supported to date but with a focus that supports young people to move towards real employment opportunities as an end goal.

Recommendation

18. **That the Board agrees to the proposed work package that will continue this work 2012-2015. This includes:**
 - a) **Continuing to support the Outdoor learning in National Parks Project until September 2013. This includes extending the Development Officer post until then. (CNPA contribution 8K)**
 - b) **Working closely with the local authorities supported by the CNPA and its partners to ensure that they take a lead in delivering a three year action plan that builds on the success of the project and is monitored and evaluated by the existing steering group (2013-2015).**
 - c) **From 2013 the CNPA will continue to support Outdoor Learning (as outlined above)but will focus resources on building the education work to link to skills development and volunteering**

Claire Ross
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claireross@cairngorms.co.uk