

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: CNPA APPROACH TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

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

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to outline the existing support that the CNPA gives to Community Engagement and Support within the National Park. To take note of the challenges that face communities in the future and to endorse the recommendations made below.

Recommendations

That the CNPA Board:

- a) Takes note of the considerable work that has already been carried out in relation to community engagement and support.
- b) Agrees the proposed changes in the CNPAs approach to community engagement and support going forward.
- c) Agrees that the Community Support and Education Programme Manager submits a paper to the next finance committee outlining detailed resource implications for implementing the proposed approach from 2013-2015.

Executive Summary

Scottish rural communities including those within the Cairngorms National Park are facing significant challenges in the future: rising fuel, energy and food prices, climate change and major cuts in grant funding (particularly from the public sector) are already having real impact. By 2020 there will be more people living in the National Park and more of an emphasis for local communities to be involved in the delivery of local services, in partnership with the public and private sector.

This paper outlines the good work that has been undertaken to date, including: listening to community aspirations through a range of engagement processes, supporting many of these aspirations to be realised through community action plans and supporting the delivery of the community action plans through a network of community development officers operating across the Park. Going forward this paper proposes that the next stage, building on previous activity, should focus on helping the communities in the Park to become more self sustaining with the support of a wide range of public and private partner agencies.

CNPA APPROACH TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT - FOR DECISION

Update on How the CNPA has Supported Community Engagement and Support So Far

Why the CNPA and its partners support local communities

Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan

1. The National Park Partnership Plan has identified a “*sustainable economy supporting thriving businesses and communities*” as one of its main strategic objectives and promoting community empowerment is a key mechanism to deliver this objective.

“Continue support for communities to plan for their futures, helping improve the ways it is carried out and the opportunities that effective planning provides the whole community” 4a (page 46)

“Deliver skills and training, advice and support to help communities develop their aspirations and adapt to changing circumstances through social enterprise, and encourage the formation of more community owned and operated businesses that provide revenue or other community benefits” 4b(p47)

2. On a national level there are a wide range of political drivers being developed currently that underline the objectives laid out in the Park Partnership Plan. One that clearly does this is the proposed “Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill”, the response to which the Board is also being asked to consider.
3. Taking the above into consideration the CNPA and its partners support communities because:
 - a) They are a key partner in delivering the National Park Partnership Plan.
 - b) They give advice on a wide range of local and national issues. It is important to recognise that there is a lot of experience and local knowledge that could be better utilised.
 - c) Community Councils have a statutory role in regards to planning.
 - d) The delivery of community led projects that deliver the aims of the National Park and provides a vehicle for a range of partners to collaborate (public, private and community sector).

How Does the CNPA Currently Engage and Support Communities?

Through Community Networks

4. **Through existing community networks:** Community Planning Partnerships, Ward Forums, community engagement events led by other partners (specifically the local authorities, and the voluntary/community sector)

5. **Through supporting the voluntary/community sector:** the CNPA works very closely with the voluntary/community sector. The sector is quite cluttered and have developed organically over time: Aberdeenshire favours Rural Partnerships and Development Trusts, in Highland there are community companies and the CVS (Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey), Tomintoul and Glenlivet have recently created a Development Trust (with a membership of over 200)

Park-wide Networks

6. Through the Association of Cairngorms Communities. (AoCC) and the new Community Council Planning Reps Networks that brings Community Councils together to discuss planning issues. There is an aim to share best practice and disseminate information about the Park directly to the communities.

Community Action Plans

7. Seventeen of the twenty one communities in the National Park have carried out community action plans. A process that identifies community priorities and the resources that are needed to address them where appropriate. All of the community action plans are monitored by Community Planning forums (or steering groups) that bring together the resources to support implementation of the action plans

Community Development Officers

8. Currently we part fund a network of Community Development/Liaison Officers (see annex one for details).
9. The role of Community Development Officers has been extremely beneficial they have to date:
- a) Supported 250 community groups across the National Park
 - b) Drawn down 2 million in additional funding for community projects (including capital projects)
 - c) Increased volunteer numbers and created greater levels of community cohesion.
 - d) Facilitated various sessions for the National Park (LDP, Park Plan consultations)

Through CNPA Board Members

10. CNPA Board members support communities in a wide range of ways in particular those that are directly elected or live in the Park. Local councillors have a statutory role to play in representing their local area.
11. Through leader and other funding sources (Scottish Government, Big Lottery etc.)

Recommendation

12. **That the Board takes note of the considerable work that has already been carried out in relation to community engagement and support.**

Community Engagement and Support Going Forward

Vision for the Future 2020

13. It is important to outline a clear vision of where communities within the National Park should aspire to be in the future. Communities, particularly in rural areas face significant challenges with rising fuel, energy and food prices. There is a raft of legislation coming through that is heralding a new set of political drivers. There will be more people living in the Park in the future and there is an increasing emphasis on communities becoming more self-sufficient: generating their own incomes and potentially managing more local services. The economy is moving towards becoming more localised using new technologies to connect with the outside world. The role of the CNPA should be to help communities become fit for purpose, encouraging a much more joined up approach with the skills and confidence to meet these challenges.

Recommendations for Future Community Engagement and Support

14. Using existing community engagement networks more proactively and promoting key messages about the National Park through the ward forums and other key networks (AoCC, Inclusive Cairngorms) has been inconsistent. The CNPA need to be more effective about how it uses community networks, ensure a more effective presence at meetings and link messages to clear themes being promoted by the National Park Authority, look to improve public perception of the organisation and respond to misinformation that exists about the remit of the CNPA.

Engagement and Community Action Planning

15. The CNPA have supported an intensive cycle of community engagement through Community Action Planning and consultation on the National Park Partnership Plan and the Local Development Plan. The CNPA and partners need to ensure that community action plans are reviewed as and when the community themselves feel it is appropriate, supported by the Community Planning Partnerships. Going forward this process should be much less resource intensive, as there is a core of volunteers in most communities who have already gone through the process and seen its benefits.

Delivering the National Park Partnership Plan Effectively Through Communities

16. The community action planning process has contributed to communities working in a more cohesive “Team Town” approach but there is a real issue as to the number and effectiveness of community groups and what they deliver within the National Park. In Badenoch and Strathspey alone there are over 400 different constituted

voluntary sector groups including: Community Councils, associations, community companies, and development trusts. Many of these groups duplicate effort and compete for the same funding sources.

17. The following actions are recommended to strengthen the 'team town' approach:
 - a) To support communities to work together more effectively and consolidate their structures. To identify new delivery structures that may need to be put in place (i.e. Development Trusts as in Tomintoul/Glenlivet and Kingussie)
 - b) To encourage communities to communicate more effectively, join forces where possible (including putting together larger funding applications)
 - c) To promote sustainable community approaches with an emphasis on income generation and higher levels of community empowerment utilising the special qualities of the National Park
 - d) Bring businesses and local communities closer together through the Cairngorms Business Partnership.

The Ongoing Role of Community Development Officers

18. As is shown on the table (annex one) there are a number of community development/liaison officers operating within the Park most of which are partially resourced by the CNPA (as a Community Planning Partnership partner) .All are supported until the end of 2013. With resources becoming tighter it would be worth considering reducing the number of CDOs that we support but develop Service level Agreements with key agencies to ensure a consistency of delivery with the voluntary/ community groups on each side of the Park.

Role of CNPA Board Members

19. CNPA Board members do a significant amount to promote the National Park however they could be utilised more effectively, equipped with a clearer sense of what the key messages are and how to deliver them with confidence. There is also a role for CNPA members to be involved in the delivery of community projects (e.g. Braemar, Tomintoul & Glenlivet etc) and finally a role for Board members to seek out and encourage a range of informed and talented local people to get them more involved with the activities of their local community and the National Park.

More Focussed Approach to Community Support

20. The resources of the CNPA, as with other public sector organisations, have reduced significantly and it is important that we support communities where we can ensure the greatest impact. There should be a commitment for all communities to benefit from the fact that they are situated within the Cairngorms National Park. However as recent examples: Tomintoul & Glenlivet, Ballater and Boat of Garten, there are times when an enhanced level of support is appropriate. The reasons for this can be wide ranging but could include:
 - a) A community that is under threat (economically, environmentally)
 - b) A community where there is an overriding issue (planning/housing)

- c) Communities that have developed effective delivery mechanism, that have the confidence and skills to generate more complex projects of benefit to the wider area, and that contribute clearly to the aims of the National Park.

Raising the Profile of the Cairngorms National Park's Approach to Community Engagement and Support

- 21. The standard of Community Development and support carried out in the Park has evolved and improved over the lifetime of the previous Park Plan. There are numerous examples of best practice both in the process of community engagement and how the Park Authority and its partners have helped local communities realise many of their aspirations.
- 22. What needs to be improved is how we communicate to others: partners (including the Scottish Government) about the good work that has been done.
- 23. Going forward we should consider:
 - a) Show casing good examples of community engagement and support more effectively (Tomintoul and Glenlivet, Development Trust in Kingussie , Ballater Housing Group)
 - b) Create opportunities for local communities to network and learn from the good practice of others (both within and out with the Park)

Recommendation

- 24. **That the CNPA Board agrees the proposed changes in the CNPAs approach to community engagement and support going forward which are in summary:**
 - a) **Better more planned use of existing community networks**
 - b) **Reviewing existing community action plans**
 - c) **Delivering the National Park Partnership Plan more effectively through communities, developing a more joined up “Team Town” approach.**
 - d) **Continue to support the Community Development Officer framework to support communities to become more self sustaining.**
 - e) **Enhance role for members in community engagement and support**
 - f) **More focussed approach to resourcing community support, dependant on need and capacity.**
 - g) **Raised profile of the best practice work that has been delivered through community engagement and support in the Park.**

Resource Implications for a New Approach

- 25. This new approach will require resources to enable it to be delivered in a consistent manner and to ensure match funding from key partners. The Community

Development Officer framework is key in taking this approach forward. Currently supported by the Leader programme the framework is resourced until the end of 2013. It is important to plan coverage until the end of the operational plan cycle (March 2015)

Recommendation

26. **That the CNPA Board agrees that the Community Support and Education Programme Manager submits a paper to the next finance committee outlining detailed resource implications for implementing the revised approach from 2013-2015.**

CLAIRE ROSS

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claireross@cairngorms.co.uk

Annex One

Current Support for the Community Development Officer Network

| Area | Hosted by | Amount CNPA contributes | Other funders | Post ends |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------------|--|-------------------|
| Highland | | | | |
| Strengthening Communities Project | VABS | £45K (three year project) | ESF £200K Highland Council £30K Robertson Trust £20K | End of March 2015 |
| CDO project | VABS | £25K (2 year project) | Highland Council £6K | End of March 2014 |
| Laggan Forest Initiative | LFT | £30K (three year project) | Leader £120K HIE £30K THC £15K Robertson Trust £18K | End of Dec 2013 |
| Aberdeenshire | | | | |
| Deeside Donside Development Project | BRD Ltd | £45K (three year project) | Leader £78K AC £10K BRD £18K MAP £9K | End of March 2014 |
| Community Action Planning project Aberdeenshire | MAP | By Project | Aberdeenshire Council £11K per annum | On going |
| Moray | | | | |
| Tomintoul and Glenlivet regeneration project | T&G Development Trust | £45K (three year project) | HIE £45K Moray Council £45K Crown Estate (in kind) | End Aug 2015 |