

**CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY  
FINANCE COMMITTEE**

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**FOR DECISION**

**Title: CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK BIOLOGICAL  
RECORDING SYSTEM**

**Prepared by: Hamish Trench, Head of Heritage and Land  
Management**

**Purpose**

To formally approve commitment of expenditure to the above project.

**Recommendations**

That the Committee formally approve the expenditure as detailed in the attached Expenditure Justification.

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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

## EXPENDITURE JUSTIFICATION

### 1. Title

#### CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK BIOLOGICAL RECORDING SYSTEM

### 2. Expenditure Category

Project		Grant		Consultancy	x
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### 3. Description

In accordance with National Park Priorities and specific outcomes in the current CNPA Corporate Plan, we intend to contract a consultant to establish a biological recording system for the Cairngorms National Park/Cairngorms LBAP area.

The purpose of the contract is to meet the following requirements:

- To provide a focal point for the collation of all known sources of biological records for the Cairngorms National Park.
- To promote interest and encourage recording / submission of new data.
- To manage, update and verify biological records for the CNP.
- To transfer all CNP biological records to the *National Biodiversity Network*.

To begin the establishment of the Recording System in this financial year it is required that funding for the contract be approved for the time period October 2008 until 30 March 2011. It is considered most cost effective to fund the work for this period rather than on a year by year basis.

### 4. Rationale and Strategic Fit

There are a range of bodies involved in the collection and collation of biological records within the National Park. These records stretch from casual observations sent in to the local LBAP officer to detailed surveys commissioned by agencies such as SNH or NGO's. Consequently records are stored in wide a variety of places and formats. The purpose of establishing a CNP system is to draw these together, realise greater value from the data and promote the identity of the Park.

The third aim of the CNP is to "promote public understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area". There has been a long

standing intention to provide a biological recording system that serves as a focal point for the accumulation of data and a resource that may be easily tapped by the public. This is recognised in the National Park plan which contains the following action:

***Establish a central biological recording system for the National Park which collates and manages all species and habitat records for the Park, is linked to the National Biodiversity Network, and is readily accessible to all.***

(Priority for Action 6.1, Ref3b)

This is also one of four achievements listed under conserving and enhancing biodiversity and landscapes in CNPA's 2008-11 Corporate Plan:

<b><i>Achievements</i></b>	<b><i>What impact will this achievement make</i></b>
<i>A mechanism is in place which allows biodiversity information to be collated and accessed by anyone interested in the Park.</i>	<i>People can be engaged in collating information that is made available to all to inform proactive management, decision making, and help develop understanding and enjoyment of the biodiversity in the Park. This will allow us and others to prioritise our efforts and resources to best effect.</i>

It is intended that the data be readily accessed via the internet through the existing National Biodiversity Network (NBN) service. The successful consultant will be expected to co-ordinate record keeping and submit records to the NBN, but not to set up the web page(s), this function will be led by SNH.

The establishment of an effective system will underpin a number of opportunities to engage people in the biodiversity of the Park. In the immediate future, for example, the Economic and Social Development Group are working with accommodation providers in preparing a Visitor Wildlife Recording Scheme. The Biological Records Centre needs to be in place for this scheme to operate effectively.

## **5. Option Analysis**

In preparing the brief for this project we have considered the most effective use of resources and partners. Discussions with SNH have led us to separate the 'front-end' web access for the public from the data management role. This contract is for the data management role, while SNH will lead on the public web interface, ensuring consistency with their existing work on national datasets and relationship with NBN.

The 'front' for the recording scheme will be via the SNH website: WIMBY (What's in my back yard?) WIMBY accesses all its data from the National Biodiversity Network. SNH have indicated that they can provide a single CNP web portal for CNP records. This is considered a more cost effective and beneficial option than NESBReC being contracted to also provide a new webpage. It also allows for data to continue to be accessed by the public if and when the contract with NESBReC ceases.

The role of the CNP web portal will also be considered in future arrangements for data access.

## 6. Risk Assessment

The success of this contract will depend upon a strong relationship being maintained between the contractor, CNPA and other partners with an interest – in particular SNH.

The contract is set to run until March 2011. There is no obligation to continue the contract beyond that time. The requirements and opportunities for the system will be reviewed during 2010-11 to establish what further inputs are appropriate and what contract arrangements may be required. At this stage it is anticipated that some form of continuation beyond March 2011 will be desirable, but at a substantially reduced cost following the establishment phase.

## 7. Costs and Funding

A commissioning brief was sent out to four organisations. Only one tender was received; from the North East Scotland Biological Records Centre, who are well qualified for undertaking the contract.

The opinion of the Heritage and Land Management group is that the quote provided by NESBReC is appropriate and acceptable value for money. £15,000 is budgeted in the 2008-09 Operational plan for this work already.

Period	Cost in £
Oct 2008 – Mar 2009	14,894
Apr 2009 – Mar 2010	35,114
Apr 2010 – Mar 2011	29,954

NB SNH has indicated that they may be able to contribute funds to this work in the 2009-11 financial years, but this is not yet confirmed.

## **8. Deliverables/ Impact Assessment**

Clear outputs were set out in full in the commissioning brief and will be included in the contract. A brief report will be sent to CNPA on a monthly basis providing a quick-view outline of progress, contacts made, records collated etc. Key outputs are:

- Data collation from a wide range of identified sources;
- Ongoing data sharing agreements put in place with key sources;
- Promotion of the system including leaflet and awareness raising at events;
- Training to encourage effective recording of key species, linked to CAP programme;
- Verification of data and transfer of data in a suitable form to the National Biodiversity Network.

## **9. Value for Money**

We sought the best value for money possible by putting this contract out to tender by suitable consultants. The tender returned by NESBReC is considered realistic and based on 9 years of experience and a proven track record in this field. NESBReC have exceeded expectations in their proposed delivery of publicity for the recording system and training events.

## **10. Exit or Continuation Arrangements (where applicable)**

It is very much in our interests to let this contract for a reasonable time period (until Mar 2011); NESBReC have understandably indicated that they would only wish to enter into a contract for a period of at least two years. This is because of the need for them to recruit and train extra personnel and also the cost effectiveness of providing additional IT resources.

This contract will be set up to establish the recording system and would run until March 2011. There would be no obligation to continue beyond that time. The role of the Biological Recording System contract would be reviewed during the 2010-11 financial year. At that time an assessment of the opportunities for future activity will be made and inform any future contract requirements. At this stage it is anticipated that some form of continuation beyond March 2011 will be desirable, but at a substantially reduced cost following the establishment phase.

## **11. Additionality**

Getting to this point has been a long journey with a range of partners interested in setting up a CNP recording system. It began before the inception of the NP. CNPA has played a key role in clarifying the purpose and desirable outputs. Without CNPA's input it is unlikely to happen. We have secured SNH input to the web-based face of the project.

## 12. Stakeholder Support

This has been reviewed by the *Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity and Landscapes Delivery Team* and the *Cairngorms LBAP Management Group*. Aberdeenshire Council have also been involved in drawing up the commissioning brief. All partners involved recognise the value of establishing this basic resource and view it as a priority for delivery.

## 13. Recommendations

That the Finance Committee approves the commitment of funds until 2011 to commission NESBReC to establish and manage the Biological Recording System as specified above.

Name: **Will Boyd-Wallis** Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## 14. Decision to Approve or Reject

### Head of Group

**Hamish Trench**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Finance Committee

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Board**

Name:	Signature:	Date: