
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: Scottish Government Rural Land Use Study and Royal Society of Edinburgh Inquiry - Opportunities for the National Park

Prepared by: Hamish Trench (Head of Heritage and Land Management)

Purpose

To consider the opportunities presented by recent reports on the hills and uplands including the Royal Society of Edinburgh report into the future of Scotland's hill and island areas and the current government review of rural land use.

Recommendations

That the Board approve the establishment of a small time-limited group of members, staff and partners to identify opportunities resulting from recent reports on hills and uplands and the Scottish Government Rural Land Use Study to promote the Park as a focus for action on integrated rural land use.

Executive Summary

The future of Scotland's rural and particularly upland areas is under detailed scrutiny following recent reports by the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Scottish Agricultural College, National Farmers Union of Scotland and the launch of a Scottish Government study into the current and potential capabilities and uses of rural land. From pressing issues of upland farming, land use and economy to the wider strategic push for a more integrated approach to rural land use, the National Park is a place where the issues can be clearly demonstrated, but also where solutions could be creatively explored.

There is an opportunity to raise the profile of the National Park in these national debates in order to secure greater momentum behind the delivery of the National Park Plan and to encourage others to see the National Park as a place where solutions can be researched, trialled and developed. This would help those currently living, working and managing the Park and help to realise the broader value of the Park in the national context.

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RURAL LAND USE STUDY AND ROYAL SOCIETY OF EDINBURGH INQUIRY - OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE NATIONAL PARK - FOR DECISION

Background

1. The future of Scotland's upland, hill and island areas has come under detailed scrutiny over the last few months through publication of the following reports:
 - a) Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) Committee of Inquiry into the Future of Scotland's Hills and Islands;
 - b) Scottish Agricultural College Report on 'Retreat from the Hills';
 - c) National Farmers Union of Scotland 'Manifesto for the Hills'.
2. All three address the challenges facing land-use and rural development in the hill and upland areas of Scotland and make recommendations. The most wide-ranging in scope is the Royal Society of Edinburgh's Inquiry, which covers a wide range of rural issues from land management to transport, rural housing to tourism, and makes an extensive series of recommendations to government.
3. It is striking that many of the recommendations are in tune with the aspirations of the National Park Plan and with the integration agenda set by the four aims of the Park (the Cairngorms National Park Plan is highlighted as an example of good integrated planning in the RSE report).
4. At the same time, the Scottish Government has recently launched the Rural Land Use Study. This is a programme with the objective 'to provide an assessment of the current and potential contribution of Scotland's land assets to, for example, food production, energy provision, rural development, forestry expansion and biodiversity'. It is a programme of research that will explore the capabilities of land for different uses and the multiple demands on areas of land. The study will inform a rural land use summit to be held towards the end of 2009 that will consider a more integrated policy approach to how rural land is used – addressing competing pressures and demands across sectors such as agriculture, housing, energy and forestry. In the meantime, a programme of research is being commissioned by government to provide an evidence base.

Opportunity

5. The Cairngorms National Park is a significant part of upland Scotland in which most of the issues covered in these reports and the government study are particularly relevant. Many are issues that affect people living and working in the Park on a daily basis and which CNPA and partners

are already seeking to address through the National Park Plan. In addition the framework of the four aims means National Parks are areas where the issues are perhaps most vividly displayed, and also where solutions might be most creatively explored.

6. There is therefore an opportunity to promote the National Park as a focus for taking forward several strands from these reports and current government research through:
 - a) raising the profile of existing initiatives in the Park that contribute to this agenda, securing greater momentum in their delivery;
 - b) showing how National Parks can be used to develop new ideas and be recognised as places to put sustainability into practice;
 - c) identifying a small number of key recommendations that can be developed or trialled in the Park to help take forward this agenda.
7. Overall, this is an opportunity to push forward delivery of some of the current Park Plan, show the role that National Parks can play and inform future policy.
8. Annex 1 sets out a selection of the most relevant recommendations from the RSE report, noting the action already underway in the Park and some examples of opportunities that could be taken in the Park. Many of these are long-term challenges that have been recognised before, but they are brought into sharper focus by current economic events and effects on availability of finance, land and product values and costs of production inputs including fuel. These are all issues that stakeholders identify as potentially threatening the vision for the Park's land and communities.

Proposal

9. This is an opportunity for CNPA to take a lead in showing the relevance of National Parks to the current national agenda on rural land use and to encourage others to make use of National Parks as a place to focus research and new approaches, thereby helping to address several pressing issues in the Park.
10. As a first step the joint meeting of the Conserving and Enhancing and Living and Working Forums considered these issues on 9th October. The forum recognised the opportunity to take forward actions in the Park and to use the Park as a focus for case studies and new approaches. Next month the RSE committee are holding one of a national series of meetings on their report in the Park, at Tomintoul on 12th November.
11. In order to make the most of this opportunity it is proposed that:

- a) CNPA convenes a small land use strategy group comprising representatives from the board, staff and partners with an invitation to representatives of the RSE committee;
 - b) The group examines and prioritises recommendations of the RSE and other reports which are particularly relevant to the National Park and identifies where appropriate action is already being taken or could be developed further in the Park.
 - c) The RSE meeting on 12th November gauges stakeholder responses to the issues and recommendations to inform the group's discussions;
 - d) The land use strategy group reports by March 2009 on the opportunities and suggestions for action;
 - e) CNPA and partners promote and take action on the opportunities identified.
12. Once the group has reported in March 2009 its task is completed and delivery is then taken forward through existing groups and National Park Plan mechanisms.

Potential Risks

13. Given the wide scope of the reports and government study, there is a risk that discussion of the recommendations in the Park context could simply repeat discussions about the issues. The focus should be clearly on taking forward the next step and identifying where appropriate actions can be taken.
14. There is also a risk that this could appear to be a reinvention of the National Park Plan – it should instead be used as a way to bring to life the aspirations, objectives and actions we already have in the current Plan. It is an opportunity to speed up delivery of some existing actions and also to inform the strategic direction of the next Plan.
15. There is an associated risk that focusing on this agenda could distract from other delivery work. However, the process proposed above should help focus effort on a few key areas that make progress with some of the Park Plan's existing objectives and actions. By raising the profile of the Park as a place to take forward some of this national agenda, there is also an opportunity to lever additional effort and resources into the Park area.

Recommendation

16. **That the Board approve the establishment of a small time-limited group of members, staff and partners to identify opportunities resulting from recent reports on hills and uplands and the Scottish Government Rural**

Land Use Study to promote the Park as a focus for action on integrated rural land use.

Consultation

17. Discussions with staff, Management Team, individual board members and informal discussion with members of the RSE committee have shaped the proposed approach. The joint meeting of the Conserving and Enhancing and Living and Working Advisory Forums considered the reports and opportunities for the Park on 9th October. They recognised the opportunity and encouraged CNPA to take a lead. Discussions on potential joint working on some of these areas with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park are ongoing.

Policy Context

18. This is an opportunity to demonstrate the opportunities associated with Scotland's national parks. There is a close fit between the agenda being promoted by the recent reports and current government study and the National Park Plan. There is therefore potential to deliver both National Park Plan and Scottish Government outcomes, but also to develop the national role of National Parks.

Delivering Sustainability

19. Sustainability is the essence of the agenda set by the reports highlighted above and by the government study. This is an opportunity to push forward work contributing to the sustainability of the Park and also to encourage people to see the Park as a key piece of Scotland's sustainability agenda.

Delivering A Park for All

20. There are no direct implications on 'Park for All'.

Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency

21. The integration agenda set by the government study and these reports gives another opportunity to reinforce the core role played by National Parks in joining up public policy and delivery.

Implications

Financial Implications

22. There are likely to be costs associated with actions that may arise out of any opportunities identified. In some cases it may be that these can be addressed through CNPA's own operational plan, but it is more likely that they would require tailored packages of funding to be put together. By tapping into proposed programmes of research and the

wider agendas of other organisations there is potential to lever some planned expenditures from other sources into the Park area.

Presentational Implications

23. A key part of the opportunity is the chance to raise the profile of National Parks as places that are already engaged in finding new approaches to integration and sustainability – and places where others can take forward their ideas. In taking this opportunity however, we must be clear that we are not ignoring our existing delivery plans. The key message is that this is an opportunity to push forward delivery of key parts of the National Park Plan at a time when there are several threats to its delivery; and that it is part of CNPA's role to respond to new circumstances and take opportunities as they arise to help secure the long term vision for the Park.

Implications for Stakeholders

24. This is an opportunity to show how stakeholders can achieve some of their objectives through the National Park and to collectively show the potential contribution to the Scottish Government's outcomes. Consideration of the opportunities will involve stakeholders, in some cases through participation in the strategy group and in others through discussion with delivery teams and advisory forums. The delivery of any actions resulting will be co-ordinated through existing delivery mechanisms so as not to create new groupings.

Next Steps

25. The opportunities identified through the land use strategy group will be reported to the board in March 2009 with recommendations on the implications for National Park Plan delivery and actions to be taken.

**Hamish Trench
October 2008**

hamishtrench@cairngorms.co.uk

ANNEX 1: Selected Recommendations from RSE Report		
Recommendation	Current NPP work	Opportunities
Agriculture and the Environment		
6. agri-environment programmes to be substantially increased post 2013 to a level that allows all farmers the opportunity to participate in achieving enhanced levels of biodiversity, climate change mitigation, improved water management and flood mitigation		Opportunity to provide evidence of what SRDP is and is not currently delivering for these outcomes in the Park to inform change.
6a. Agri-environment schemes should be substantially simplified in construction and administration.	Provision of 'on the ground advice' to land managers to help deal with complexity and maximise opportunity.	Opportunity to provide evidence of barriers to SRDP delivery in the Park.
6b. Agri-environment schemes should have a substantially longer lifespan so that the benefits to the environment can be realised in perpetuity and changes of practice detrimental to the environment after cessation of grants should result in repayment of support.		Opportunity to trial different approach to support that offers long term consistency.
6c. agencies should identify those areas requiring grazing and determine practical means of its implementation by land managers	Joint agency action on designated sites and National Park strategic deer framework.	Opportunity to pilot approach in Park building on deer and upland framework.
Single Farm Payment		
10. A clearer definition of the public benefits paid for by the SFP is required for the period after 2013.	NPP action 'identify the various public benefits that are priorities in the NP and tailor public support mechanisms to deliver them'.	Opportunity to inform.
11. There should be a requirement for a whole farm plan for each unit in receipt of public funds to define the public good outcomes and the management protocols to achieve them.	NPP action to 'encourage whole unit and collaborative land management planning'.	Opportunity to trial and develop.
Forestry		

19. develop detailed proposals for implementing the 25% target for increase in forest cover.	Cairngorms Forest and Woodland Framework and Forest Habitat Network Project.	Opportunity to use FHN project to show where and how cover could increase in CNP.
20. initiate a joint study to examine potential of short-rotation forestry as an integral part of farming and to recommend measures for improving integration of agriculture and forestry on working farms.		Opportunity for research or pilots in CNP?
Responding to Climate Change		
23. Gov't should facilitate the development of sustainable deer management within revised regulatory and incentive based framework so that this sector contributes to integrated land-use	NPP priority for action 'supporting sustainable deer management' and Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group	Opportunity to inform revised framework and model approaches.
24. Gov't should provide targeted incentives and appropriate regulation to encourage management of existing forest and woodland to maintain carbon storage and increase further potential for carbon sequestration.		Opportunity to research carbon storage capability and value within CNP.
25. Gov't should support the wood fuel industry development with long-term measures	Clim-atic project	Opportunity to develop supply chain approach in CNP.
27a. Research is required to develop effective and efficient methods for calculating and verifying retention and sequestration of GHGs in soils and vegetation.	Low carbon estates project & Green Farm Audits	Opportunity to build on existing projects and use CNP as case study for research to value role of land management in carbon retention and sequestration.
Refocusing SRDP		
34. The boundaries of RPACs should be redrawn to better reflect the diversity of land within an appropriate administrative context	CNPA land management support role	Opportunity to provide evidence on what SRDP is and is not delivering for the Park and promote single RPAC for Park.
Energy		
43. Community based sustainable energy projects should be encouraged.		Opportunity to develop positive approach through supplementary

		planning guidance, demonstration projects, information provision.
Food		
45. The provision of local abattoirs and meat processing facilities in the Hills and Islands of Scotland should be investigated by the Scottish Government in relation to EU State Aids, the economics of operation, and the wider benefits to local businesses and the community. A geographical spread of facilities needs to be provided to improve the prospects of adding value locally to livestock products.		Opportunity for mobile abattoir facility?
46. Farmers' organisations and marketing co-operatives should make greater efforts to produce locally distinctive livestock and other food produce for local consumption and direct sale into more distant markets.	Cairngorms Farmers Market	Opportunity for CNP branding initiative for food and drink.
46a. Tourism businesses should be encouraged to use regional and local food as their dominant offering.	Action within CNP Sustainable Tourism Strategy & Action Plan. Focus of last year's tourism seminar.	Opportunity for local sourcing initiative and/or directory of local produce.
Need for Affordable Housing		
49. Government and Local Councils should urgently review their planning policies to make them less restrictive on the building of new housing in rural areas, with the emphasis instead on design, environmental footprint and landscape compatibility.	Local Plan	Opportunity to promote positive implementation of Local Plan.
More Integrated Delivery		
60. Scottish Government should ensure that the national delivery agencies need to be able to operate on a regional and devolved basis to ensure integrated delivery of policy and action to meet the diversity of needs and opportunities around rural Scotland.	Joined-up government role of National Parks and collective regional focus through National Park Plan.	Opportunity to promote need for greater integration of policy and delivery around identity of National Park.

