
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: Future Funding and Management of the Speyside Way

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Purpose

This paper explains the current and potential future funding arrangements for the route. It seeks the Board's views on how best to shape the future funding and management arrangements to deliver key aspects of the National Park Plan, Outdoor Access Strategy and implementation of the Core Paths Plan.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- a) Notes the current funding and management arrangements;
- b) Approves the funding for 2009/10 subject to undertaking a review of the current delivery mechanism to inform decision making in future years;
- c) Approves the key principles and area of work which CNPA would wish to see included in the future Development and Management Programme; and
- d) Nominates a Board member to sit on the Speyside Management Group.

Executive Summary

There are a number of drivers for change concerning the management of Long Distance Routes. This paper highlights the changes and how they might best be managed to ensure the Speyside Way meets the needs of all potential users.

FUTURE FUNDING AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SPEYSIDE WAY - FOR DECISION

Background

1. The Speyside Way is one of four official Long Distance Routes (LDRs) in Scotland. These routes are created and modified by Ministerial approval through powers conferred by the Countryside (Scotland) Act, 1967. The route has been in existence since 1982 and is managed on a day to day basis by Moray Council through a Minute of Agreement between the three Access Authorities: Moray Council, Highland Council and the Cairngorms National Park Authority. The Minute of Agreement provides the legal framework for attributing costs and the roles and responsibilities of the Speyside Way Management Group which comprises representatives from the three Access Authorities and Scottish Natural Heritage. The Management Group agree the management priorities for the route through a 3 yearly Development and Management Programme (DMP). The current DMP is due to terminate on 31 March 2009.

Changes in Funding

2. The funding arrangements for Long Distance Routes have evolved over time. Originally all the costs associated with a route were paid for by the then Countryside Commission for Scotland. Its successor body, Scottish Natural Heritage, undertook a review of LDRs and published a revised policy in 1997 which saw the grant support from SNH change. From 1998, SNH contributed up to a maximum of 75% of eligible costs, with the local authorities being responsible for funding the balance. Up until the formation of the Cairngorms National Park, the costs of managing and maintaining the Speyside Way was apportioned, on the length of the route within their boundaries, between Moray and Highland Council with grant support from Scottish Natural Heritage.
3. Since the creation of the Cairngorms National Park Authority the funding arrangements have altered to reflect that the funding for the section of the LDR within the National Park falls on CNPA. As CNPA is unable to receive Grant support from SNH, CNPA pays 100% of the shared cost of the route within the National Park.
4. The Scottish Government has intimated that funding to local authorities will be streamlined and consequently the ring-fenced funding from SNH will cease in the current financial year. From April 2009 the Scottish Government funding to local authorities will contain an element of funding for LDRs but it is not yet clear what funding formula will be used and whether the funds given will equate to existing SNH funding. The two local authorities remain concerned about the lack of information

about the process to calculate the amounts and on the lack of ring fencing within their own councils. This lack of clarity has forestalled any forward planning on the part of the local authorities as to what changes they would wish to see in the management and maintenance of the route. The funding arrangements between Scottish Government and the CNPA remain unaffected.

Gauging success

5. The 2007/08 cost of managing the LDR was £169,387 and these costs are shared as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Funder	Amount
Moray Council	£34,679
Highland Council	£3,844
Scottish Natural Heritage	£60,572
Cairngorms National Park Authority	£70,292
Total	£169,387

6. The local authorities have requested that funding contributions be rolled forward for a further year with an inflationary uplift. The reasons for this are:
 - a) there remains uncertainty over their future settlement from Scottish Government and it is not possible, on their part, to plan effectively without some indication of likely budget; and
 - b) A one year roll forward will allow the necessary work to be undertaken on devising a new three year Development and Management Programme by which time the budget position will have been clarified.
7. Whilst this is a pragmatic approach in light of the funding uncertainty, now may be an appropriate time to reflect on how well the route is meeting the needs of users and the value for money that it offers to funders.
8. The current Development and Management Programme is reaching its' end and it is always prudent and sensible to review a plan or programme to see how effectively it has delivered its objectives. Such a review will help shape future plans and provide comfort to funders that best value is being achieved.
9. An Expenditure Justification Form for funding the route in 2009/10 is included at Annex 1 to this document.

Recommendation

10. **The Board approves the funding for 2009/10 subject to undertaking a review of the current delivery mechanism to inform decision making in future years.**

Key principles and areas of work

11. The SNH Policy on LDRs is eleven years old and was written before the Land Reform (Scotland) Act was conceived. In addition, there have been many changes in how the public take access over the intervening years such as the huge explosion in cycling, and in particular, off road cycling. The LDR policy was aimed almost exclusively at long distance walkers. The Core Paths Planning public consultation exercise also highlighted the potential benefit of short sections of long distance routes and multi-use along paths. The importance of the Sustrans link between Kingussie and Newtonmore was especially singled out as meeting the needs of a very broad spectrum of users. These included children commuting to and from school, parents with prams and buggies and even cross country skiers training on adapted, wheeled skis in the summer. Concern was however expressed about other sections of the existing LDR within the National Park where the surface condition and the barriers encountered excluded all but the most dedicated of walker. It is proposed that the future priority for managing the route should be inclusive and for multi-use and this should be achieved within the 3 year life of the next DMP.
12. The proposed extension of the Speyside Way to Newtonmore is likely to be presented to Ministers by the end of the year. Once approved, it will be for CNPA to lead on its implementation. This will raise a number of issues such as funding, planning permission and management agreements but will also raise the questions on future management and staffing of the route. At present, the route Manager and Rangers are based in Aberlour. It is proposed that the role of staff, their number and location be reviewed in the development of the next Development and Management Programme to achieve best value.
13. The Speyside Way Management Group is made up of staff and elected representatives from Highland and Moray Council and staff from CNPA. There is no direct engagement with communities nor do they have an obvious means of influencing change in the management of the route. It is proposed that a mechanism be explored to provide a better link between communities and the Management of the route.
14. Summary of key principles and areas of work:

- a) The route should be managed for multi-use with a priority to upgrade the route to meeting this target within the 3 year period of the DMP;
- b) The future staffing and their location should be based on achieving best value; and
- c) An appropriate mechanism explored to ensure that communities have a voice in the management of the route.

Recommendation

15. **The Board approves the key principles and area of work which CNPA would wish to see included in the future Development and Management Programme.**

Board representation on the Speyside Way Management Group

16. At present, both Moray and Highland Councils have elected representatives on the Management Group with CNPA being represented at officer level. Cllr Allan Wright from Moray chairs the Group and Cllr Dave Fallows represents Highland Council. Whilst the Management Group have never required to vote, the constitution does allow this to happen and it is quite possible for CNPA and Highland Council to take different stances with Cllr Fallows taking the Highland Council position. The benefits of having Board representation on the Management Group would ensure a closer link with this work during a period of change and also demonstrate to partners the importance the Board attaches to the effective management of the route.

Recommendation

17. **That the Board nominates a Board member to sit on the Speyside Management Group.**

Implications

Financial Implications

18. This paper seeks approval of funding for one year (2009/10), subject to undertaking a review of the current delivery mechanism to inform decision making in future years. An Economic Justification Form is shown in Annex 1 to this paper.

Presentational Implications

19. It will be important to ensure that CNPA is shown to be a committed supporter of the Speyside Way and that the proposed review and future priorities reflect the importance that CNPA attaches to this arterial link between Newtonmore and Cromdale.

Implications for Stakeholders

20. Partner organisations may not fully endorse the changes that are being proposed for future priorities. Board representation on the Management Group will help to ensure that the changes proposed will result in a higher quality route which will meet the needs of a wider spectrum of users.

Next Steps

21. Subject to the endorsement of the Board to the recommendations in this paper, it is the intention to provide the Board with a summary of the outcomes of the review and an update on the development of the extension in spring 2009.

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