Community Liaison Co-ordinator Interim Report: Anna Barton : Badenoch & Strathspey.

Introduction

Having completed the first two phases of the Local Plan consultation, it is appropriate that we take an opportunity to evaluate the process thus far. This will enable us to continue good practice, correct and learn from mistakes and set standards and targets for the next phases. While there is room for improvement in a number of areas, it is to be recognised that the Local Plan Team worked extremely hard and to very tight deadlines to enable the consultation to take place.

Process

The first phase of the consultation was the sending out of questionnaires – one to each household and business within the Cairngorms National Park – and the results were fed into the second phase, the community consultation events.

Questionnaires and Community Profiles

There were critics of the questionnaire, some of whom had a number of valid points; some of the most commonts points were:

- 1. The questionnaire was too long, detailed & academic.
- 2. A number of households did not receive the questionnaire; how many is difficult to quantify as we only have reports of non-delivery from those who were looking out for it.
- 3. There were a few factual errors on the Community Profile maps and in the information.

Publicity

CNPA published a number of articles about the consultation process and placed advertisements in the local press. In addition, I had a letter published in the Badenoch and Strathspey Herald; placed details of community events in their Events Diary; wrote and distributed articles for each of the community newsletters; created and distributed posters for each community; stood outside Tesco in Aviemore on two mornings handing out leaflets; distributed leaflets at the Grantown Show; appeared twice on Speysound Radio and sent numerous emails regarding the events. Despite all this, a surprising number of people maintained that they knew nothing about the consultation!

Facilitators

Of the thirteen community councils within Badenoch and Strathspey, four chose Option A (CNPA to organise and run the consultation events), eight chose Option B (a joint approach) and one chose Option C (organising everything themselves). Those choosing Options B and C selected their own facilitators and one Option A offered a facilitator to help us, while still regarding the Park as the organiser. I sourced facilitators for two of the Option A communities, and for the remaining one, a member of the Community Association turned up on the day and helped. As it turned out, I also helped with the organisation of the only Option C event, so there was very little difference between the level of support required by communities.

Each facilitator or group of facilitators chose the approach that they thought would be most successful for their community, but some ideas were modified during our planning and preparation sessions. The facilitators did an excellent job, most of them taking the initiative and gave far more than was initially expected of them. There are two communities where I would endeavour to find more support for the lone facilitator – the local Community Council had not been involved in either of these cases.

Training

Training for the facilitators consisted of:

- 1. Initial briefing given by me.
- 2. Attendance at a Planning Aid Workshop
- 3. Two training sessions delivered by Colin Roxburgh and Alan Tuft, although not all facilitators were able to attend both sessions.
- 4. A facilitator's information pack.
- 5. At least one further briefing and planning session with me.

Although there were a few rumblings of dissatisfaction immediately following the training sessions, none were serious or prolonged. The facilitators, on the whole, took from the training what was relevant and useful for them.

Tools

The main tools used for the community events were maps and plans supplied by the Planning Department and the results from the questionnaires for each community. In addition, some facilitators opted to use a simplified version of the Planning for Real flags, which proved to be very successful. It was clear that most people who had the opportunity of using flags found it helpful and where they were not available, we had to work a little harder to engage people in the process. Once some flags were in place and some comments recorded, it was easier for other participants to join in. Post-its were available in some communities and some people found these useful and easier to use than the comment forms.

Having a combination of methods obviously works best – the more choice we make available, the more likely it is that everyone will find at least one method that they are happy to use.

Methods of reporting comments

The first event, in Kincraig, used one of the forms supplied by the trainers, but it was obvious that this was not producing any site-specific information, so thereafter I used a version of the feedback form created by the Park Planning Department. In most communities we used one form per subject, which worked extremely well as people could, if they so wished, endorse comments that had already been made. This simplified the process of collation and saved ensured that responses were collated in a uniform format throughout the Strath. Some communities used one form per person, which reduced the likelihood of 'copycat' comments, but increased the subsequent workload considerably.

Each time a flag was put in the map, an appropriate comment was recorded either by the individual, by the facilitator or by me. Non site-specific comments were written straight onto the comment forms. In addition, some comments were made on post-its, which were collated after the event.

The facilitators in three communities are collating their own results: I am doing so for the other ten.

Participation

Unsurprisingly, around 55% of those attending the events were between the ages of 45 and 84, and the percentage would have been much higher if we had not specifically invited school and youth groups to participate. There were very similar numbers overall of males and females, although males dominated in all age groups apart from that of 25 - 34 years, where females outnumbered males by three to one. We are still awaiting data from the three communities whose facilitators are collating the data, so I cannot give a clear indication of the total level of participation, although it is likely to have been around 5% of the local population overall. When we have all the data, we will publish participation levels in terms of percentage of community population and in comparison with the number of questionnaires returned.

Disappointments

My biggest disappointment was the low level of participation in some community events by Community Councillors; where they weren't as involved as we would have hoped, we will work with them next time to ensure greater engagement.

The facilitators and I had worked very hard on the ground to encourage participation in the events and we are disappointed that we could not attract more people. I think we should aim to increase numbers in all communities and need to ask ourselves which of the following might apply to each community:

- 1. Time was it the right day/time?
- 2. Venue would more people have come to a different venue?
- 3. Was there sufficient publicity?
- 4. Were the facilitators able to convince people of the importance of the event?
- 5. Did the bad weather have an impact?

Successes

One of the interesting points to note was that the communities with the most community activity (Laggan, Grantown, Carr-Bridge, Boat of Garten) had a significantly higher attendance rate that those with little or none.

I considered that engaging with the communities of Cromdale and Dalwhinnie would be a particular challenge, for different reasons, so we were creative in our approach to their events and delighted with the results. In Cromdale we decided to 'piggyback' on the church's annual Stovies Night, which worked very well as everyone who turned up for stovies was dragged off to look at maps at some stage during the evening. In Dalwhinnie, we used the two-pronged approach of holding the event on the day the Park Board were holding an open meeting in the village and also inviting the school pupils to come and talk about planning at the end of their day. Parents were asked to pick them up from the hall, which enabled us to reach a number of mothers, some of whom sent their husbands down later in the evening. In addition, two High School pupils came in as they got off the school bus.

Community activity in Grantown has only very recently been increased, but the community seems to have responded well. The sole facilitator there has a shop on the High Street and spoke about the Local Plan to everyone who came in!

Most common planning concerns

As the Planners will be considering these in some detail, I will merely list the most common issues.

- 1. Housing particularly for local need and to be affordable in perpetuity and for permanent residency
- 2. Environment must be protected both for its own sake and as our most important source of wealth-creation
- 3. Over-development must be avoided no large developments and not letting small villages grow too large
- 4. Paths a great deal was said about foot and cycle paths within communities as well as a way of linking communities
- 5. Design was important to a number of people, and there were also requests for it not to be possible for plans to be changed post-consent without going back to neighbours, Community Councils, etc.
- 6. A number of people took the opportunity to ask why the Park had been created and what it was for, so there is still room for education out there!

It is also worth nothing that not all issues were addressed by each community.

Conclusions

By and large, those who came along to the consultation events made thoughtful and constructive comments and the level of nimbyism was much lower than I had anticipated. The majority of the residents Badenoch and Strathspey hold the pragmatic view that some development is necessary to keep the communities alive and well, but this has to be balanced carefully against the need to protect the environment.

Community Liaison Co-ordinator Interim Report: Jean Henretty: Moray, Aberdeenshire & Angus.

Summary

Phase one of the Local Plan Consultation involved distribution of a questionnaire and holding public meetings in every community.

On the whole this first stage of the consultation was better than expected. Response to questionnaires and attendance at meetings was good compared to previous local plan consultations. Many lessons have been learned throughout the process.

Using local people to organise and facilitate meetings was a definite advantage. I would guess that the majority of people attending meetings came because of personal contact with facilitators, CNPA staff and board members. During discussion group's people were more open with facilitators they knew. Having more than one meeting in each community appears to have encouraged more participation. The use of the maps, flags and post it notes allowed anonymity and non-confrontation which appealed to a wider audience.

Feedback about the questionnaires was appreciated. Reading other responses, people appear to appreciate the complexities of the planning process.

Meeting the Planning Officers and Board members informally also helped to allay perceptions of faceless civil servants.

Questionnaires

The responses to the questionnaires were varied. Many people commented that they found the questions too complicated and time consuming but thought provoking. However the number of responses and comments indicated a wide range of residents do have an interest in the Park and their community. The responses were important to the organisation of the meetings. Significant issues were highlighted and gave facilitators clues to lead discussions. Participants were able to read conflicting opinions and appreciated the differing views within their own communities.

Publicity

In most areas the meetings were well publicised in the press and by leaflets or letters. In villages leaflets were either distributed by hand or post. Hand delivery was by far the best method as the person knew if the home was occupied and could also speak to residents. Not all homes are on the CNPA mailing list which meant some people did not receive notification. Word of mouth gave the best response. At most meetings people came either because they knew the facilitator or were part of a community group which had been targeted.

Recommendations: - Hand delivery of leaflets is best method in small settlements but not in scattered communities or larger towns. Newspaper adverts may not be widely read, press releases with photographs appear to be noticed. Using a variety of methods may be best.

Facilitators

The use of local people to organise and facilitate meetings was a definite benefit. Each community has its own communication network and factions. It was essential to identify these networks to increase the participation. The poorest attended meetings were in areas without facilitators or good community networks.

There were also problems when facilitators did not co-operate or preferred to use their own methods against advice. Although this was not a widespread issue it indicates the potential for facilitators to counter the CNPA consultation.

There could be a potential issue where a facilitator is perceived to represent the CNPA and may be a target for abuse.

Three of the CNPA staff facilitated in their home areas where no local people were available. They were useful team members as they were enthusiastic and had more knowledge of the CNPA. **Recommendations:-** There may be a need for one main facilitator in each community however it would be useful to have a team of local people from a variety of groups to call on as required. This could improve the communication network and reduce pressure on one person. There may be a need for guidelines for facilitators to follow.

Training

Feedback on the training has been positive. Very few of my facilitators had previous experience therefore they were open to the suggestions made at the training sessions. Most facilitators were prepared to go with the flow and learnt from their experience. This was also a good reason for more than one meeting in each community as the first session became the practice run with changes made to subsequent meetings.

Recommendations:- It may be useful to hold a debriefing session for all facilitators to share experiences which may be better than formal training.

Tools

As a supporter of the "Planning for Real" tools I used similar methods at all the meetings. Although the tool may appear too simple it appeals to a wide range of people. People were encouraged to write comments or plant pre-marked flags on to maps of their community. This format is favoured by people who do not like to talk in public as it is anonymous and non-confrontational. The tool is also more inclusive as it is suitable for people who cannot write or children. The wide range of suggestions and comments collected indicates that the process was successful. Some people preferred to talk therefore the facilitators were available to chat informally to people and wrote their comments.

Recommendations:- Continue to use a wide range of methods however include simple tools such as pre-printed cards. There is scope to use IT which may appeal to young people or is available on the Internet for interactive consultations.

Meetings

At least one meeting was held in each community. The preferred option was to hold either an outreach session or drop in session followed by a discussion meeting. Not every community followed this option. The drop in and outreach sessions were kept informal and encouraged a wide range of issues to be discussed.

The discussion groups were more formal and encouraged informed debate about local issues. The debate followed a period for reading questionnaire comments and feedback from previous meetings. The objective was to encourage people to appreciate the wide range of views in each community not only their own opinions.

The initial feedback has been encouraging. Most people enjoyed talking about their communities and sharing ideas. Everyone appreciated meeting the CNPA planning team and board members informally. Any minor conflicts were allayed over a cup of tea.

Recommendations:- Continue to use a wide range of venues and formats to suit the local community. Target specific groups by attending their meetings.

Participation

The age and gender of each attendee was recorded. This indicated the typical age of people who attended the meetings was over 45 and males out numbered females. There were younger people attending open sessions however very few in the age range 18 – 30. Children and young people under 16 were targeted in some communities with outreach sessions in some primary schools and youth clubs. Secondary schools were not targeted as from experience it is difficult to access classes due to constraints of the curriculum and also pupils are not always receptive while in school.

Recommendations:- target age range who do not attend public events.

Hospitality and venues

Local community groups and small restaurants were asked to supply refreshments. The benefits were it relaxed the audience; it encouraged local groups to participate and also promoted local businesses. Most meetings were held in local community halls. The variety and condition of the halls reflected the community spirit. By using the community facilities it encouraged participation of the hall committees and promoted their venues.

Recommendations:- Continue to support local facilities, even when conditions are poor. The CNPA could form a village hall forum so that communities may learn from each other.

Community Partnerships

There was some disappointment that some Community Council's and Associations weren't as involved as we would have hoped and we will work with them next time to ensure greater engagement.

In contrast some communities have organisations which are proactive and could be useful participants. These may be the local community development company, hall committees or the WRI. Each community would have at least one such organisation.

Recommendations:- Widen the range of organisations who participate by creating a community database. Communicate directly with Community Council office bearers and other organisations with a simplified regular newsletter or electronic bulletin. Encourage groups to post the information on public notice boards or cascade to their own mailing lists. It may be useful to ask for feedback which would give an indication of distribution.

Actions in preparation for phase two

- 1. Debrief existing facilitators.
- 2. Attend community meetings to feedback on phase one and invite participation in phase two.
- 3. Increase the number of facilitators to include people from various age groups.
- 4. Expand the communication network.
- 5. Prepare a draft schedule of meetings.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS/FINDINGS ON COMMON THEMES:

The results of such a vast consultation exercise are of course very varied, but there follows a brief summary of the main themes, after which there is a brief summary for each community meeting and a summary of the main Questionnaire results.

Housing:

Every community was extremely concerned about housing issues, but in particular the lack of affordable housing for local people [and especially yound people who find it almost impossible to get a foot on the property ladder]. Most areas of the Park suffer from extremely high property prices, which stems from a small market combined with high pressure from people buying second/holiday homes. The Local Plan is seen as a tool for delivering a better supply of affordable housing for local people.

Another big issue for housing is the rate at which many people see their communities growing, and a particular concern over large housing developments which can have a detrimental effect on the character of what was (often) a small and compact highland village. This leads on to large sub-urban type developments and a loss of village character [which can be important for the tourist industry].

Design:

Many people are concerned about both the design of new housing layouts, and of the buildings themselves. Large suburban schemes on the periphery of a village can take away the original charm which attracts tourists, as noted above. General concern over building design did not lead to a call for all buildings to follow 'traditional' patterns, but generally to improve the quality, whether trad or contemporary in style. Many comments were also supportive of the need for new buildings to be designed as more energy efficient and 'sustainable'.

Environment:

Almost every-one showed great concern and respect for their environment, which is not surprising but it always good to have confirmed. Tourism is the main economic driver for the Park area, and this is largely driven by the natural environment and landscape; people perceived the need to protect it, and even enhance it where appropriate. There was also a wide perception that this included cultural heritage as well, such as listed buildings and scheduled monuments. Many suggestions were given for local buildings or landmarks which may not currently be protected by being 'Listed'. Many people also suggested local habitats or public amenity spaces which should also be protected and enhanced.

Settlement Growth & Development:

Most people wanted to see their community stay much as it was, with small-scale development satisfying local development needs. Most people seemed to agree that development should generally be concentrated within existing settlements, and anything outwith should be very carefully considered and designed. Better community facilities were also high on everyone's agenda. There were many suggestions in each community as to which buildings, amenity areas and habitats (within and outwith the settlement) that should be protected.

Renewable Energy:

There was a general support for the principles of renewable energy, but mainly on a small scale (for community/domestic installations), most people being opposed to large-scale commercial installations such as wind-farms.

Business:

Most communities cited the need for small-scale business units for smaller firms/start-ups; the need for better facilities for the tourism industry were also a common issue ~ relating to the wider economy. The need for more jobs to be created locally, and the need for economic diversity, were also commonly noted.

The CNP Local Plan will take these general themes and issues into account, and aim to develop a Local Plan which contains policies and recommendations which can facilitate solutions and release potential, all of course in line with the four Aims of the Park.

COMMUNITY MEETINGS: brief summaries.

(A brief summary of some of the issues raised follows below (a summary of the Questionnaire results follows). We had over 1600 people attend the meetings, some 10% of the Park's population, which is a great result.

DALWHINNIE 2:12:04

The need for affordable housing was the hot topic, with a number of potential sites suggested. The need for community facilities was also raised, particularly a landscaped area around the hall as amenity space, as well as sports facilities near the Loch. Tree-screening is also required around the substation, and a caravan park/campsite could be created near the hotel.

LAGGAN 25:11:04

The 41 people (20% of the population – a great turnout!) who attended Laggan's meeting had many ideas for business sites and opportunities, the development of foot + cycle paths, and the need for improved water + sewage facilities. A TPO was also requested for the elm tree behind the hall.

NEWTONMORE 17:11:04

The lack of affordable housing was again a hot topic, as well as protecting green community spaces. Concern about the loss of businesses in the village was expressed by many. There was also strong support for the development of a youth club/facility and children's play areas, as well as better recycling facilities.

KINGUSSIE 27:11:04

The need for small business units, the need to protect the land behind West Terrace from development, and the need for better town-centre parking were all raised at the meeting, as well as concerns over the design quality of new development ~ particularly with regard to energy efficiency.

KINCRAIG 27:10:04

Concerns were raised over the high level of second homes in the area, and the need for affordable housing for locals (and the need to raise the level of affordable housing in new developments). There is also a need for small workshops/business units, and good ideas for community renewable energy schemes.

AVIEMORE 23:11:04

The Aviemore facilitators hosted a very professional two-part event, courtesy of the AHR Conference Centre. The afternoon drop-in session generated a lot of interest and discussion, which was followed by the afternoon Q&A session. Overall 118 people debated the big issues of the new school facility, local (indoor) sport facilities, lack of community facilities in new housing estates, and the need for more footpaths, and better links to AHR.

ROTHIEMURCHUS + GLENMORE 22:11:04

Affordable housing for local people was again a big issue, as well as restoring/protecting the buildings at Tullochgrue, expanding the Visitor Centre, need for recycling facilities (especially at campsites) and foot/cycle path all the way from Glenmore to Aviemore.

BOAT OF GARTEN 29:11:04

Boat had a splendid turnout of 103 for their drop-in session, where some of the main issues were: concerns over large housing developments damaging the villages' character & structure, the need for small business units and a community centre, ideas for protected sites and the need for affordable housing in order to increase the chances of a new school. Community renewable energy schemes were also supported, as was better quality building design.

CARR-BRIDGE 20:11:04

On a very cold and snowy evening there was a good turn-out of 73 people at the drop-in session, where the big issue was peoples' concern over large housing developments destroying the character of the village, whilst not addressing the need for affordable housing. The need to protect the local wood + bog habitats was also suggested, as well as community buildings and the bridge. Sport and youth facilities are also required.

DULNAIN BRIDGE 16:11:04

A good attendance of 62 discussed the need for business & retail facilities to be maintained and developed, the need for a youth club ~ as well as riverside walks and cycle-paths. Concerns were also raised at the loss of steadings and small farms to housing development.

GRANTOWN-ON-SPEY 18:11:04

As with all the other communities, affordable housing featured strongly, with many wanting to see more opportunities for self-build. Local businesses highlighted the high costs associated with operating in a rural area, the need for start-up units and support with apprentice schemes. Many wanted to see design controls and low-energy buildings. Improved cycle paths which link with other villages was a popular suggestion.

CROMDALE 26:11:04

On the housing front there was support for a variety of types, from crofting small-holdings to open market and affordable, with sites suggested. There were also lots of suggestions for sites that should be protected, a footpath link to the Speyside Way, and support for CNPA design guidelines.

NETHY BRIDGE 30:11:04

A good attendance of 76 discussed a need for sheltered housing, concerns over the loss of woodland to development, protecting the Highland games field, support for better quality design ~ especially energy-saving - and the need for small business units.

TOMINTOUL 23:11:04

47 people attended an open day and the youth club members also had their say. The need for affordable/social housing was again noted, as well as the need for small business and community units, sports facilities (indoor + out), re-use of the old school building for business and community, need for recycling facilities, protection for the Square and Main Street, and support for good quality innovative as well as traditional building designs.

GLENLIVET 1:12:04

Three meetings were held with good turnouts for this small scattered community. There was a general feeling against larger housing estates, and a need for affordable housing to target local needs. Business sites need to be made available, with start-up units, and more tourist facilities. The heritage site at Scalan College also needs to be improved and protected.

DONSIDE 18:11:04

Two meetings were held. Affordable housing is needed but people were concerned over 'ribbon-development' stretching along the roads, housing should be more clustered. Small businesses need to be encouraged, especially craft/tourist related, and new houses should be 'sustainably' designed.

MID-DEESIDE + CROMAR 25:11:04

New housing should be within existing settlements, and there is scope for sites in Dinnet south of the North Deeside Road; there is also a need for community amenity space. Promote more outdoor activities, and protect/info heritage sites such as the crannog, celtic cross and stone circles.

BALLATER + CRATHIE 14:12:04

Two meetings were held; the open day had over 90 attending. There was much concern over the proliferation of second-homes within the area, and a need for affordable housing for people who work locally; new housing should also be eco/environmentally friendly and use renewable energy. There is also a need for small business units and support for a community-centre at the old school. A popular suggestion was that the many local paths be linked and up-graded.

BRAEMAR + INVEREY 3:12:04

48 people attended two meetings. There was also concern here over the large number of second-homes, and need for housing for locals, as well as small business units. The existing campsite could be expanded and indoor sport facilities developed. Many footpaths were suggested, as well as the need for a pub!

ANGUS GLENS 2+4:12:04

Meetings were held in Glen Isla, Glen Esk and Glen Clova.

As there are very few homes in the Glens within the Park boundary, the consultation was open to residents who live in the rest of the glen(s).

Glen Isla: Again the lack of affordable housing and employment for local people was the main issue. The condition and maintenance of roads was also a priority. There is also no parking for visitors/walkers at the head of the glen.

Glen Esk: The loss of land-based employment was an issue; need for economic diversity. Suggestions that derelict homes should be renovated and improve tourism interpretation.

Glen Clova + Prosen: Maintaining the wilderness was noted as a priority. Any development should be around the existing settlements and should be sensitive to the natural environment. The issue of a possible new visitor centre/ranger station in Glen Doll generated considerable debate.

SUMMARY OF MAIN QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS:

1. Are you answering questions on behalf of:				7. Are there any specific environmental			
No	reply	Yes	No	improvements rec	uired wit Yes	hin your ar No	ea? ?
household	78	1294	36	tree planting	313	523	: 142
main		4000	404	landscaping	287	507	145
residence	257	1020	131	walls + fences	319	471	157
%	18%	73%	9%	walls + leftces wildlife habitat			
business	474	212	722		307	431	170
2. Is there a nee	d for more	housing		pathways	405	418	137
in your area?	u ioi iiioie	nousing		8. Are there any b	uildinas	etc. within v	our /
a) Open market housing				area which need protection?			
,	Yes	No	?		Yes	No	?
to rent	651	458	117	Buildings	463	271	192
to buy	590	520	103	landscape	272	293	226
				archaeological	260	285	268
2. Is there a need for more housing in your area? b) Low cost/affordable				historical sites	321	266	252
	Yes No ?			9. Are you in favour of renewable energy			
to rent	962	231	69	developments?			
to buy	918	242	72		Yes	No	?
to build	757	295	97	wind farms	240	942	49
				hydro	206	873	91
3. Where should	•	•		biomass	257	768	140
	Yes	No	?	turbines*	668	483	93
within villages	1016	168	28	hydro*	635	430	135
around villages	776	362	51	biomass*	668	388	157
open country	236	817	48	• = community	'		
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INTRODUCTION TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND CONSULTATION MEETING RESULTS:

- There follows the Questionnaire Results and comments from Consultation Meetings for each Community Area. *
- Where we received detailed written comments, for either the questionnaire or from a meeting, it has not been possible to reproduce all of these in full within this document, as they already fill several files!
- This Consultation Report should be read as a summary of the findings; should anyone wish to see the detailed responses not included here, they can be viewed in the CNPA Ballater office.
- As we've had a huge amount of information to collate, it may be the case that your comment has been accidentally omitted from this report; please let us know if a particular comment that you made (which should be included) is missing, and we can issue it as an adendum.
- Proformas for the consultation of interest groups/bodies and other stakeholders were originally going to be included in this report; these are still being collated and will be contained within the Phase 2 report.

If you have any queries regarding this report, please contact:

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This report is also on the Cairngorms National Park Authority website: www.cairngorms.co.uk