

# Cairngorms Food for Life Development Plan Synopsis



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## Introduction

The Cairngorms Food for Life Development Plan is a strategic regional food and drink plan which has been developed collaboratively by the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) and Soil Association Scotland.

The CNPA and Soil Association Scotland share the vision that local food production, procurement and consumption within and around the Cairngorms National Park respect the overall aim of caring for the soil, biodiversity, resources and communities of one of the most unique and important natural environments in Scotland.

The overall vision of the Plan is to:

**‘increase the availability and use of local, fresh and seasonal produce for both residents and visitors in the Cairngorms National Park, and in so doing to seek long-term improvements to our health, environment and economy’.**

David Green, Convener  
Cairngorms National Park Authority, 2010



## Context and Rationale

In 2009 the Scottish Government launched its first national food and drink policy 'Recipe for Success'¹.

The policy sets out the following aims:

- Sustainable economic growth of the food and drink sector
- Healthy and sustainable food and drink choices
- Celebrating and building on Scotland's reputation as a 'land of food and drink'
- Sustainable public sector food procurement
- Accessible and affordable food for all
- Secure and resilient food supplies
- Improving understanding about the food we eat

The Cairngorms Food for Life Development Plan leads the way in delivering the far reaching aspirations of the national food and drink policy at a regional level.



**Food for Life** is a key programme of work for Soil Association Scotland. As well as campaigning for food on the public plate which benefits the local economy, public health and the environment, Food for Life is working to transform our food culture. This Plan is part of Food for Life's work to enable communities to develop, manage and sustain food action plans which bring long term benefits to health, the local economy, the environment and help to mitigate climate change. Soil Association Scotland recognises the important role of organic farming and food production systems in accomplishing this vision.

This is reflected by the Scottish Governments' recent policy document *Organic Futures: An Action Plan for organic food and farming in Scotland*².

### **Food and drink is of key importance to the Cairngorms National Park for the following reasons:**

**Agriculture** is important to the management of the land and unique environment of the region and makes up 70% of the total land area. However food production in the region is limited by the soils, climate and terrain and is currently dominated by livestock.

**The food and drink sector** is an important contributor to the region's economy and employs a significant proportion of the region's workforce.

**A resident population** of 17,200 has significant food needs and is demonstrating an increased interest in consuming locally produced food and drink, and in growing their own food.

**The health** of the regions' residents is vital and can be improved through providing the population with the information and access to make healthier food and drink choices.

**Tourism** dominates the region's economy. Visitors spend a significant amount on food and drink, and a growing number of visitors are keen to buy locally produced food and drink as part of their holiday experience.

## Aims and Outcomes

While the aims set out the broader aspirations of the Plan, the outcomes offer more specific, tangible objectives necessary for the Plan's delivery.

The aims are as follows:-

### Aims:

- To strengthen and develop the viability of primary food producers across the Park;
- To strengthen and develop the viability of the tourism industry across the Park;
- To develop supply chains and markets for local produce;
- To develop stronger links between the food and drink, tourism, retail and land management sectors, health agencies and communities (including education) through the medium of food and drink;
- Provide a model for a deliverable and forward thinking Sustainable Regional Food Strategy which can be replicated across Scotland.

In achieving the five main aims of the Plan, the following outcomes will be delivered:-

### Outcomes:

- Increase in the amount of quality food and drink produced in the Park;
- Increase in the procurement of local sustainably produced food across the Park;
- Increase in the consumption of locally produced food in the Park;
- Expansion of the Park's local food economy;
- Decrease in the Park's food carbon footprint;
- Improvement in the health of the park's residents;
- Increase in the strength and resilience of the Park's communities.



## Actions

In order to meet the above aims and outcomes of the Cairngorms Food for Life Development Plan the following eight areas of action, and specific activities within each area, have been identified:

### 1. Developing market intelligence – understanding the local food sector:

- **Food and Drink Audit** - compiling a detailed audit of food and drink produced in the Park, and what local produce is being purchased by retailers to provide market intelligence for the area. The audit would provide information to address supply and demand issues such as gaps in the market. It would also provide baseline information in order that the Plan's recommended actions can be evaluated.
- **Directory** - drawing up a directory of producers and processors for use by retailers, caterers and tourism businesses.

### 2. Improving distribution of local produce:

- **Feasibility study** - distribution needs and solutions.



### 3. Improving supply and availability of local produce:

- **Increasing production** - supporting diversification of production, production of new product lines, and engagement of new entrants into food production.
- **Increasing production: land use** - increasing the availability of land for food production.
- **Increasing processing** - carrying out a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis of key processing infrastructure.
- **Increasing utilisation** - identifying the barriers inhibiting supply of local produce within the Park, and appropriate interventions.

### 4. Increasing procurement of fresh, local, seasonal and organic produce:

- **Food for Life Catering Mark** - The Food for Life Catering Mark<sup>3</sup> consists of a bronze, silver and gold award system to enable caterers to work towards using ingredients that are fresh, local, seasonal and organic.

### 5. Increasing demand for local produce:

- Local food guide - producing a simple leaflet for all consumers (visitors and residents) providing information on the range of local foods available, outlets selling local food, farmer's markets, websites for more information about local food, and the benefits of buying local.
- Cairngorms National Park brand – examining the possibilities for greater uptake of brand use amongst food producers.
- Local food campaign - executing a campaign which resonates well with residents and tourists.

### 6. Developing food tourism:

- Marketing of local food to visitors - exploring web-based opportunities to promote local food to visitors and encouraging local tourist businesses to use more local food, and use food provenance in their marketing.
- Developing the business opportunity for food tourism - investigating opportunities for food tourism.

### 7. Building skills and improving collaboration:

- Cairngorms Food Forum - enabling food producers, processors, retailers and caterers to come together and discuss key issues.
- Training and learning - exploring opportunities for training, for example in the areas of health and safety, food labelling, marketing, local procurement, menu planning, low carbon measures.

### 8. Engaging schools and communities:

- Food education programmes for schools - mapping of existing food education work in schools and any other existing food education initiatives. Important links will be made with Curriculum for Excellence and Outdoor Learning to identify the resources required to deliver a food education programme in schools in the Park. Local Authorities will be encouraged to work towards the FFL Catering Mark.
- Community initiatives - empowering residents to grow their own food and to cook with local produce.



## Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation of the Cairngorms Food for Life Development Plan will be ongoing throughout the duration of the project, and will include the measurement of specific outputs such as the number of new local food businesses created, number of producers supplying caterers in the Park and the number of schools actively taking part in the Food for Life project.

## Delivery

The CNPA, as the key agent, will house and support the Cairngorms Food for Life Development Plan, whilst ensuring its delivery in partnership with other relevant agencies. The Cairngorms Food Group has been created to implement the Plan with representatives drawn from the primary production, processing, retail, hospitality and tourism sectors based within the Park. Soil Association Scotland will play an ongoing role in overseeing and supporting implementation and ensuring it fits with the ethos and aspirations of FFL Scotland.

Potential core funding for the project is likely to include contributions from the CNPA; Scottish Government; national agencies, for example Visit Scotland; the Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society (SAOS); and relevant Local Authorities; as well as in-kind contributions.



## Progress to date

As at July 2011 a Producers Directory and a Local Food Guide have been produced, as has a food & drink audit. A Food for Life Development Officer has been engaged to deliver a schools & education programme throughout the Park and a pilot Grow Cairngorms training programme encouraging local residents in the Park to grow their own is underway.

£120,000 funding has been secured through LEADER and a 3yr commitment to the project from the CNPA to deliver many aspects of the Plan.



## References

- <sup>1</sup> The Scottish Government (2009) Recipe for Success – Scotland's National Food and Drink Policy, The Scottish Government.  
**Available at:** [www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/277346/0083283.pdf](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/277346/0083283.pdf)
- <sup>2</sup> The Scottish Government (2011) Organic Futures: An Action Plan for organic food and farming in Scotland, The Scottish Government.  
**Available at:** [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/03/14093552/8](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/03/14093552/8)
- <sup>3</sup> [www.soilassociation.org/Trade/Catering/Howtoapply/Awardcriteria/tabid/1296/Default.aspx](http://www.soilassociation.org/Trade/Catering/Howtoapply/Awardcriteria/tabid/1296/Default.aspx)

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The full Development Plan is available to  
download from [www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk)

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