
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: ANNUAL REVIEW OF NATIONAL PARK PLAN DELIVERY

Prepared by: Gavin Miles, Strategic Planning and Policy Officer

Purpose

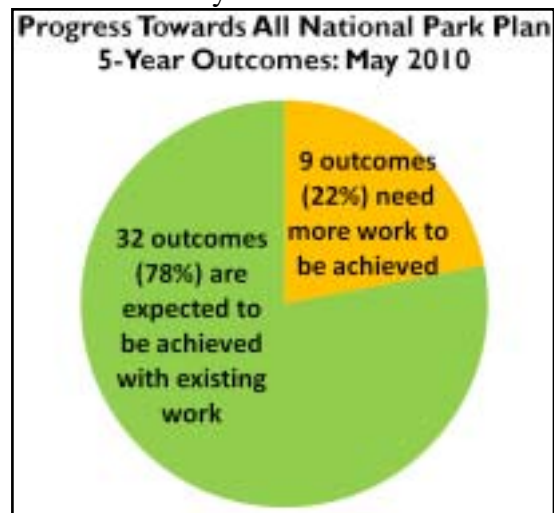
To provide an overview of the National Park Plan process from the past year and highlight delivery of the current National Park Plan to date. To update the Board on development of a set of 'Health Indicators' that will help to give an overview of the health of the National Park.

Executive Summary

The paper summarises delivery of the National Park Plan to May 2010. For each priority for action it notes three of the main achievements of the past year that should together give an impression of the range and scope of the National Park Plan's work. During the past year we held a mid-term 'health check' of delivery of the National Park Plan that helped renew partners focus on delivery of the most important outcomes. This has provided a clearer expectation of what work is required to 2012.

The paper highlights that the CNPA expects 32 of the Park Plan's 5-year outcomes will be achieved by 2012 and that there is some uncertainty over 9 outcomes. It also notes that there is likely to be greater change over the coming months as some outcomes are fully achieved, and it becomes apparent that some cannot be achieved as fully as was anticipated when the Park Plan was prepared.

A set of National Park 'health indicators' are proposed to support monitoring of the state of the Park and Park Plan, and to provide a simple way of explaining change in the Park. The proposed indicators are based around the aims of the Park, and are limited in number for simplicity. A number of criteria have been applied to the indicators to make them as useful and reliable as possible. Wherever there is an opportunity, information that is collected nationally and can be compared nationally has been used.



The paper recognises that they are not a sum of everything about the National Park, or a substitute for other more detailed, specific or varied information. They are intended to provide a quick summary of the health of the Park and to be able to demonstrate change in the Park. Most are ready to be used to inform future National Park Plan monitoring reports and to be used in the next State of the Park report in 2011. The proposed indicators are:

- a) The Condition of Designated Sites
- b) Landscape Change and Wildness
- c) Listed Buildings on the Buildings at Risk Register
- d) Social Culture
- e) Land Area funded for public benefits under Rural Development Contracts

- f) Value of Agriculture and Forestry in the Park
 - g) Energy produced from renewables in the Park
 - h) Carbon Storage/Management of the Park
 - i) Visitor Appreciation of Special qualities
 - j) Awareness of the CNP Brand
 - k) Visitor numbers to top 10 visitor attractions
 - l) The Percentage of Core Paths that are 'Fit for Purpose'
 - m) Population profile
 - n) Rural Deprivation Statistics
 - o) Gross Value of the CNP
 - p) Community Activity
-

Supporting Sustainable Deer Management

- a) Good progress made towards the development of a Cairngorms Deer Framework;
- b) 'National Eat Venison Day' was promoted by the CNPA board in conjunction with national events promoted by the Scottish Venison Working Group
- c) Opportunities for increased access to deer stalking was explored with the Country Sports Tourism Group

Providing High Quality Opportunities for Outdoor Access

- a) Adoption of the Core Paths Plan
- b) Partner contributions of £500,000 allowed The Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust to operate successfully with path works undertaken in Braemar, Carrbridge and Kingussie
- c) The number of health walk schemes was expanded across the National Park

Making Tourism and Business More Sustainable

- a) Continued roll out of Cairngorms brand including incorporation on Stagecoach buses in Badenoch and Strathspey
- b) Launch of a new electric vehicle to highlight and adapt to the effects of climate change
- c) Cairngorms Business Partnership developed and launched, providing a focus and lead for the business sector
- d) An economic survey to compare economic data with historical information was completed

Making Housing More Affordable and Sustainable

- a) The 'Our Community A Way Forward' community planning structure was selected by the Scottish Government as a good demonstration of best practice, and community action planning was expanded across the National Park.
- b) At the Local Plan Inquiry, Reporters endorsed an affordable housing policy seeking between 25% and 40% of new housing being affordable;
- c) Rural Empty Property Project and Scottish Government funding was targeted for key housing projects in the Park

Raising Awareness and Understanding of the Park

- a) A major refit of three VisitScotland visitor information centres using the Park brand, panorama and images from the Park was completed
- b) A new leaflet promoting the Cairngorms National Nature Reserves was produced and work on better signage on three reserves was completed
- c) Appointment of an outdoor learning post to develop outdoor learning opportunities for schools

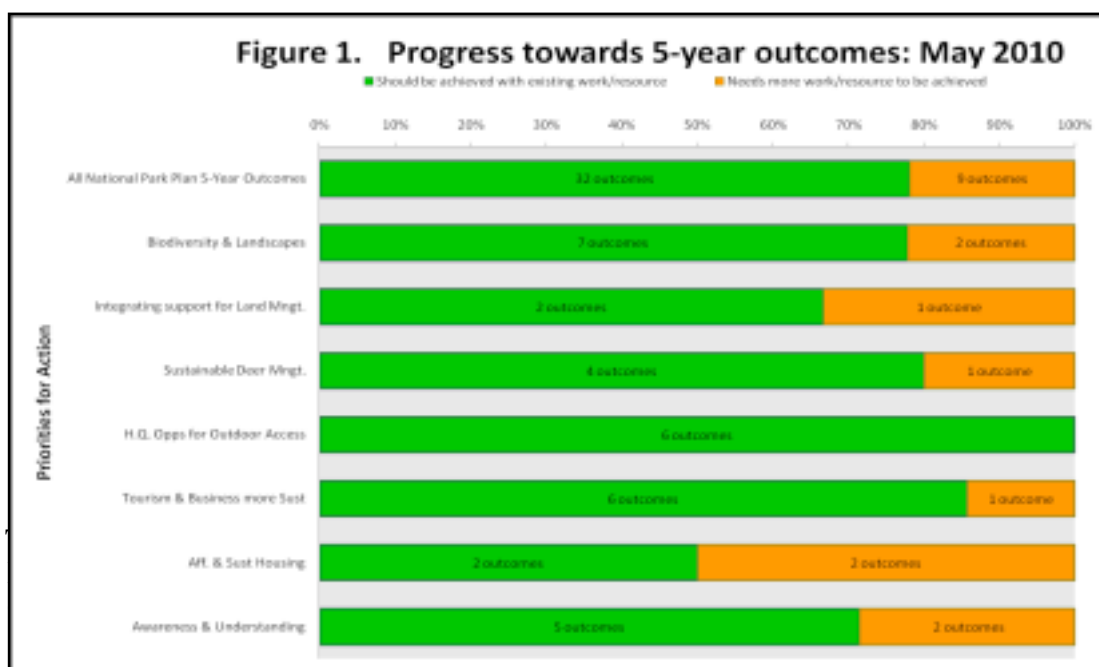
Achievement of Outcomes and Delivery of Actions

7. Assessments of progress are made using two 'traffic lights' systems of green-amber-red to provide an easy visual summary. The Outcomes are assessed using 5 classes associated with a specific definition:

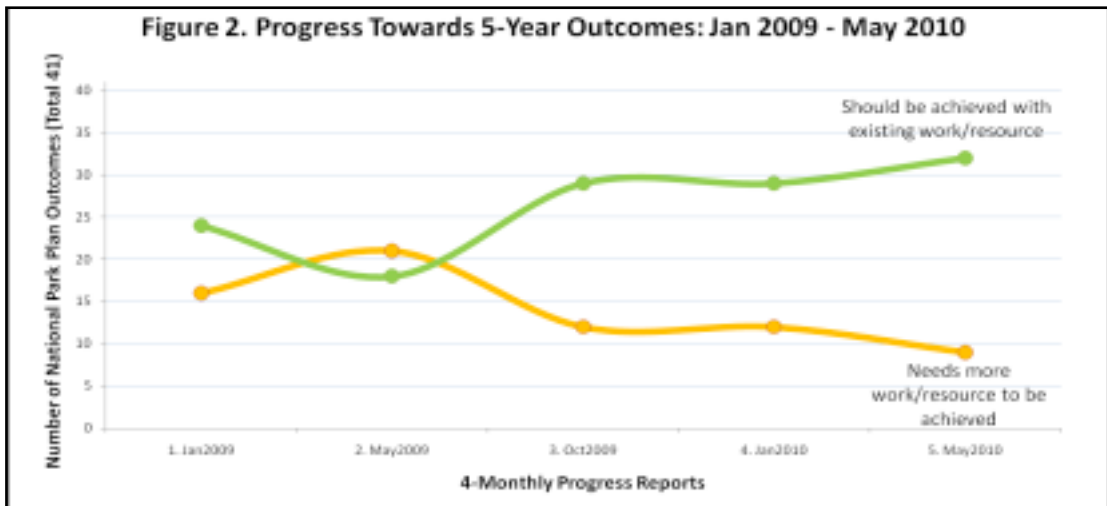
	1 Will not be achieved
	2 Unlikely to be achieved
	3 Needs more work/resource to be achieved
	4 Should be achieved with existing work/resource
	5 Achieved

8. In order to make the assessments across each priority for action as comparable as possible, they are recorded by programme managers in same format:
 - a) The number and text associated with the chosen class 1-5 above; followed by
 - b) A short justification for the assessment – why that assessment has been chosen;

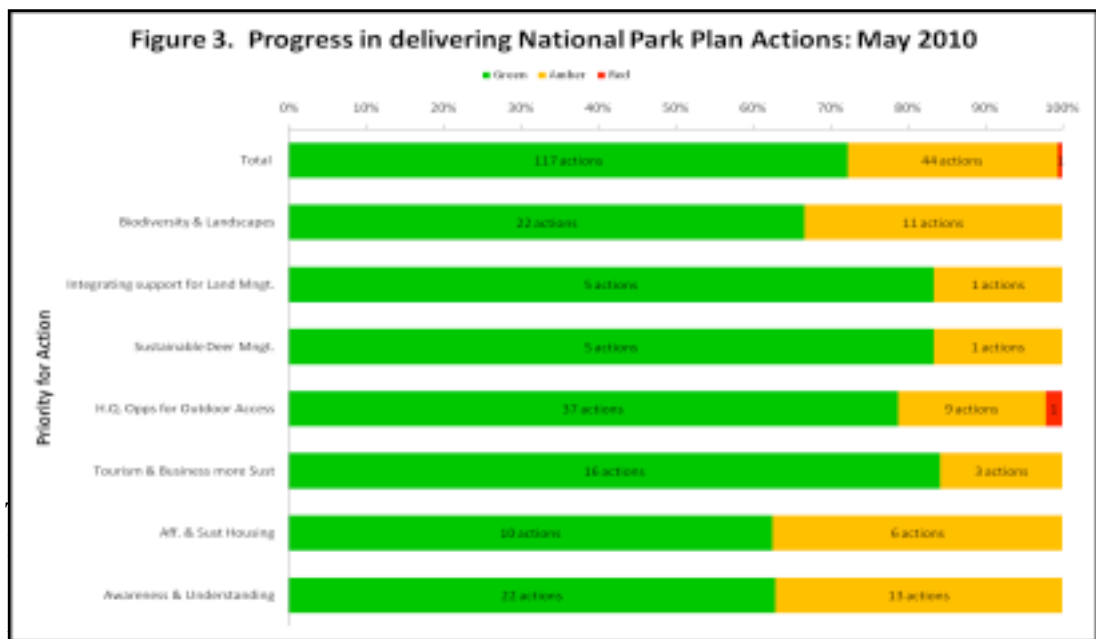
- c) A short summary of any major achievements of the Delivery Team (if not already mentioned above);
 - d) What needs to be done to move the outcome to a number 5 by 2012; and finally
 - e) A statement about the indicator or other data (if relevant).
9. The assessment is undertaken by the respective CNPA officers managing each Priority for Action. Further detail on the reasoning behind the assessment of individual outcomes is provided in the tables of Annex 1.
10. The Actions associated with each priority for action are assessed with a simpler system where:
- a) **Green** = Progress towards the outcome or action is on track and there is confidence that the outcome or action will be achieved by, or before 2012;
 - b) **Amber** = There is uncertainty about whether the outcome or action will be achieved, or there may be delays in achieving it.
 - c) **Red** = The outcome or action will not, or is unlikely to be achieved.
11. Figure 1 shows the assessment of progress in delivering the National Park Plan's outcomes for each priority for action at May 2010.



12. NPA estimates in Figure 1 that 78% of the 5-year outcomes will be achieved by 2012 with existing work and resources and that 22% require more work to be achieved. None of the outcomes are considered to be unachievable by 2012, and none have been fully achieved yet.
13. However, as we get closer to 2012, we will start to see more of the outcomes completed, moving towards completion, or for some, towards acceptance that they will not be achieved by 2012. Figure 2 below shows how our assessments of progress towards the 5-year outcomes have changed over the last 18 months.



14. Figure 3 shows that more than 70% of the actions in the Park Plan are considered to be green and on track to be delivered, with around 30% considered to be amber and requiring more attention or alternative action. The only action that is considered not to be achievable by 2012 is linked to the completion of the Speyside Way – now likely to be 2013.



- 15.

Key points from the assessment of progress in delivering the Park Plan's actions and achieving its 5-year outcomes are that:

- There continues to be good progress in delivering the National Park Plan's 5-year outcomes with nearly 80% currently on track to be delivered by 2012;
- There will be more change in the assessments over the coming 18 months as some outcomes are completed and as it becomes clearer that some cannot be achieved in that timescale.

'Health Indicators' for the National Park

16. Board members will be aware of the commitment in the Park Plan to identify a set of headline indicators to provide a snapshot of the state of the Park and to help monitor change in the Park. This paper provides an update of progress on their development and identification.

17. Internally, and with the help of partners, we have been pulling them together over the past three years. Progress was initially slow because for there have been significant barriers in the form of data availability, access, robustness, or its ability to show change. Nevertheless, we want to be able to use such indicators in the life of this Park Plan and to be able to use the in the next State of the Park Report in 2011.
18. More data is now available for the Park boundary or for areas that nearly match the Park Boundary. For example, the General Register Office for Scotland now publish population and household projections for both Scotland's national parks, and the Scottish Government publish data linked to the national parks in their Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics website (www.sns.gov.uk). Equally, work commissioned about the National Park, such as the recent Economic Baseline Review has added to our understanding of the Park as well as improved our statistical baseline.
19. There are many sources of information that contribute to our collective total knowledge of the Cairngorms and the National Park, and as far as possible they can be referred to or signposted through the State of the Park Report that accompanies the draft the National Park Plan. However, in identifying 'Health Indicators' we are looking for a few, select bits of information that can tell us a lot about the Park and the ways it changes over time. They are essentially a communication tool that makes it easy to explain change in a way that people understand. They are not to provide a comprehensive survey or statement about all aspects of the National Park.
20. Because the indicators are intended to be about the health of the Park, we have based them around the four aims of the Park:



21. For each aim, we think that only a few indicators (no more than 5) would be most easily understood and easy to explain. Clearly, there will be a wealth of other facts, figures and information that one might draw on in talking about any of the aims or how they are being delivered. The health indicators would simply be a reference point to any discussion that provides some statistical reliability and comparability.
22. There are a set of principles or criteria that we've tried to apply (one or more of) to the indicators to make them as useful as possible.
 - a) ***Does the data exist already and is it easy to get, or would it be easy to create and update?***

Collecting robust data is normally a time and resource intensive process. It makes sense to use data that is already available wherever possible – especially when that data is collected by organisations that are required to collect it and report it. However, there may also be some indicators that we would want to use that need to be created from the start. In those cases, the likely cost and time that would be needed to develop them and update them will have a bearing on whether they are realistic or not.
 - b) ***Is the data available for the Park boundary or area representative of the Park?***

Many data sets are collected for areas that do not match the National Park boundary. Some can be adjusted or recalculated for the Park but others simply don't tell us enough about the Park.

c) ***Is the data comparable with national and regional data?***

Wherever possible we want data that can be compared against national and regional data to show differences or similarities. It helps provide a consistent monitoring framework across Scotland.

d) ***How frequently is the data updated?***

The frequency of updating of data is important as it shows incremental change over time. Ideally, annually or more frequently updated data would be used. However in some cases the most useful and appropriate data may be less frequently updated. For example, the Cairngorms Visitor Survey that has been repeated this year will provide important results but we may not be able to compare them with other figures for another 5-6 years.

e) ***Is the data easily explained and communicated?***

It is possible to create useful indicators based on range of different data sources. However, the more complicated they are to create, often the more complicated they are to explain to a lay-person. The purpose of the health indicators is to help communicate the overall health or state of the Park so they need to be easily understood by most people.

f) ***Does the data tell us about more than one thing?***

A good indicator will tell us about more than one thing either because it is measuring a number of factors, or because we can draw more from it because we know it is related to other factors. If we know a lot about those relationships we can extrapolate more about the other factors. One example would be the presence of snow patches on the Cairngorm plateau that can tell us about climate change, as well as the likelihood of habitats and associated species survival.

g) ***Does the data react to change or itself change?***

There are lots of interesting facts and figures about the Cairngorms and the Park that can be significant in their own right, but that do not normally change much over time, or only change infrequently. Examples would be: the number of 4000ft mountains in the Park; the land area of the Park (most years!); the number of scheduled ancient monuments in the Park; or the number of designated sites in the Park.

23. Bearing in mind the criteria above, we have proposed a selection of indicators for each Park aim below. Data is available for most of the proposed indicators, with some requiring more development in the future. For each aim, there are many other sources of information that are relevant and tell us more about specific issues relating to that aim. The selection of the proposed health indicators does not lessen the importance or value of any other information.

Aim 1 – The Conservation and Enhancement of the Natural and Cultural Heritage

Indicator 1 – The Condition of Designated Sites

24. This indicator is monitored and reported by SNH. It is a national indicator and comparable across other areas and Scotland. It's a good one for the Park because so much of the Park is designated for nature conservation (40%) and those sites are important for many of the Cairngorm's most important species and habitats. The assessment of condition can also tell us something about the wider health of species and habitats as the sites are affected by the wider area. This indicator could be supplemented by SEPA's assessments of the ecological status of water bodies.
Data for the Park is available.

Indicator 2 – Landscape Change and Wildness

25. Landscape is one the most important elements of the Park's natural heritage, experienced by everyone. Over the past three years we have developed a better baseline about the landscape character of the Park and the sense of wildness people experience in

32. The Cairngorms visitor survey provides a snapshot of what visitors like about the National Park. The features that are most closely related to the Park's special qualities are recorded.

Data for the Park is available.

Indicator 2 – Awareness of the CNP Brand

33. The CNP Brand has been developed to be associated with the Park's special qualities and with high standards of management. As it develops, more information about its influence and awareness of it will be needed.

Data to be collected with development of CNP brand.

Indicator 3 – Visitor numbers to top 10 visitor attractions

34. This indicator will tell us about trends in visitor numbers, the likelihood of visitors experiencing a range of special qualities, as well as a range of interpretation facilities. The list includes the main visitor attractions and includes geographic variation across the Park.

Data for the Park is available.

Indicator 4 – The Percentage of Core Paths that are 'Fit for Purpose'

35. The core paths help promote the understanding and enjoyment of the Park. This indicator will tell us about the quality of many of the most widely used paths in the Park.

Data for the Park is available.

Aim 4 – Promoting Sustainable Economic and Social Development of the Area's Communities

Indicator 1 – Population profile

36. The population profile for the Park tells about the number of people living here and their ages. We can estimate household numbers from it, the need for services such as schools, types of healthcare demand and social change.

Data for the Park is available.

Indicator 2 – Rural Deprivation

37. Although communities in the Park are not 'deprived' in the same ways as parts of the central belt or large urban areas, remote and rural communities have more difficulty accessing many services. This data is available through the Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics website and is comparable with national statistics.

Data for the Park is available.

Indicator 3 – Value of the CNP

38. This indicator provides a headline figure for the amount of money attributable to the Park. It would need to be supplemented with other data such as the employment and unemployment rates, average incomes and results for the Cairngorms Business Partnership's business barometer.

Data available as estimates.

Indicator 4 – Community Activity

39. In identifying an indicator for this topic, we are trying to provide a sense of the ability of communities to do things for themselves. There are lots of examples from the numbers of clubs and associations in communities to the booking rates of community halls. Accessing and updating such data is problematic, so we are trying to develop an indicator based on whether communities are promoting a community action or development plan for their future.

Data for the Park is available.

Next Steps

40. The next steps are:
a) To continue implementing the current National Park Plan;

- b) To continue to identify the National Park Health Indicators, for use in National Park Plan monitoring reports and inclusion in the next State of the Park Report. Wherever possible we will seek historical data for the indicators to provide further context.

Gavin Miles
14 May 2010
gavinmiles@ Cairngorms.co.uk