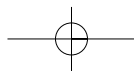




TOURISM AND THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK
Introducing the Park's Sustainable Tourism Strategy and
Survey of Visitors



STOP PRESS July 2005: The Cairngorms National Park Authority has been awarded the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism. It is the first National Park in the UK to receive this, and reflects the importance of sustainable tourism to the area and the National Park Authority's commitment to working with tourism businesses to achieve this. More information on Europarc and the principles of the Charter can be found on www.europarc.org



Europarc Logo

WHY IS TOURISM IMPORTANT TO THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK?

The tourism industry is already well-established within the Park and is the primary source of income and employment. The impact of tourism on the environment, on local people and on the local economy must be carefully managed to the benefit of all, both at the present time and also in the future – put simply, this is what we mean by *sustainable tourism*.

The Scottish National Parks, unlike others in the UK and around the world, have a social and economic development aim alongside their more standard aims of conservation, understanding and enjoyment of the countryside. Tourism is a vital part of this social and economic development, and at the same time also helps to deliver each of the aims in the Park's remit.



Deeside, Visitscotland Aberdeen & Grampian

The Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) aims to lead and co-ordinate the sustainable development and management of tourism. It is already working closely with the tourism industry, including a wide range of both public and private sector partners. Already, it has:

- developed the Cairngorms National Park Brand
- produced and distributed a range of promotional and informative brochures and leaflets
- erected branded signs at points of entry to the Park
- provided relevant training for tourism businesses and staff
- instigated two-way communication with tourism interests through the Visitor Services, Information and Tourism (VISIT) Forum
- commissioned a Visitor Survey, based on 2,500 face-to-face interviews and over 1,000 self-completion questionnaires undertaken over 12 months from May 2003
- delivered a Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism, prepared in 2004 following wide consultation with businesses and organisations throughout the Park area.

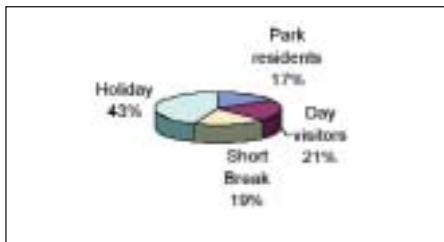


Both the Visitor Survey and Strategy for Sustainable Tourism are summarised in this booklet.

ABOUT THE PARK'S VISITORS

It is estimated that 1.4 million visits are made to the Park each year, although no precise figures are available. (Source: CNPA Visitor Survey 2003/4 & CNPA STEAM results)

Who visits the Park?



(Holiday = 5+ nights. Short Break = 1-4 nights)

Most visitors are on holiday, staying away from home, but many are day visitors, including a significant number who live within the Park.

Of the holiday/short break visitors:

- around half spend their whole holiday in the Park
- many also visit other parts of Scotland



Glen Muick, David Gowans

Visitors – quick facts:

15% of all visitors are from overseas
50% are from the UK but outwith Scotland
23% have children with them
44% of "short breakers" are from Scotland
43% on holiday are over 55

The age profile of day visitors is different, spread more evenly across the age range:

63% of day visitors are 25-54
23% of day visitors are over 55

How much do visitors spend?

(average per day, short break)

£31 on accommodation
£21 on food and drink
£8 on shopping
£6 on entertainment
£3 on transport in the area
£69 in total each day

Although most is spent on accommodation, the amount for food and drink is also significant.

For day visitors, food and drink is the main area of expenditure.



Strathdon, Visitscotland Aberdeen & Grampian

Why do visitors come?

26% of day visitors come for walking
56% of all visitors spend time sightseeing
50% go walking
20% take part in other outdoor activities
22% visit castles, museums & other heritage sites

Walking doesn't only mean hill-walking – low level walks are equally important.

General sightseeing is particularly important to holiday (longer - stay) visitors.



Ballater, Visitscotland Aberdeen & Grampian

How do visitors find out about the Park?

How satisfied are visitors to the Park?

55% use information from a previous visit
17% use word-of-mouth (friends & relatives)
11% use the Internet
10% use tourist brochures
25% get information after arrival

With so many relying on previous visits and word-of-mouth, delivering a high quality service to Park visitors is absolutely vital for success. Tourist Information Centres are an important resource for visitors seeking information after arrival.

Our visitors are mostly very satisfied with their experience, rating the Park at 8.5 out of 10 on average. No single problem is of real significance. However, only 38% believe it is easy to find information about the Park. This leaves huge room for improvement, and will be addressed by the CNPA and its partners.



Glen Doll, David Gowans

What else is important to Park visitors?

The quality of the environment is by far the most important element for visitors. When asked what they liked most about the Park, visitors highly rated "spectacular views", "wide open spaces", "trees and landscape colours", "walks", "fresh, clean, unspoilt area" and "wildlife". "friendly people" also scored highly.



Jimmy Mitchell

However, at least 75% would like to have a better understanding of the Park's character - what makes it special - including more opportunities to experience the area's cultural and historic heritage, being able to buy local crafts more easily and taste more local produce.

ABOUT THE PARK'S TOURISM BUSINESSES

Source: postal survey of all tourism enterprises in the Cairngorms National Park area, summer 2004



Lecht, Jimmy Mitchell

How successful is business in the Park?

52% say demand has grown in the last 3 years

BUT

65% say that to be profitable, they need more business

More business is needed Jan-April & Oct-Nov. Marketing, and also other activity (for example, events), is needed particularly for these times.

What is important for Sustainable Tourism in the Park?

(Survey respondents were asked to score a range of issues important to sustainable tourism in the area. The following Top 10 were rated "very important" by the percentage of respondents shown.)

1=(71%) 1=(71%) 1=(71%)	to encourage good customer service to conserve landscape and wildlife to encourage visitors to conserve nature & wildlife	<p>Respondents rated conserving the environment more highly than attracting more business.</p> <p>In addition, many are interested in good environmental management practice within the context of their own businesses. Around 75% have already taken at least some relevant action.</p>
4 (65%)	to attract more visitors at certain times of year	
5 (61%)	to attract more tourism in general to the Park	
6 (60%)	to improve visitors' understanding of environmental impact	
7 (53%)	better information for visitors before arrival	
8 (51%)	better information for visitors after arrival	
9 (47%)	better interpretation of natural heritage & wildlife	
10 (41%)	better interpretation of cultural/historic heritage	



Neil McIntyre

PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The following is a brief summary of the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism. More detail can be found on www.cairngorms.co.uk or from CNPA offices.

Vision: by the year 2010, we will be able to say.....

The Cairngorms National Park is now one of Europe's leading National Parks, judged on its sustainable management of tourism and the high quality of the visitor experience.

Visitors come to the Park year-round to enjoy its fine landscapes, appreciate its wildlife and heritage, experience its character and take part in a range of activities. They are fully aware of what the Park has to offer, understand the importance of conservation of the area and are keen to support this.

Tourism businesses feel they are a part of the Park, benefit from it, offer a high quality experience to visitors and are involved in environmental management.

Local communities are happy with the level of visitors in the area and, working with the CNPA, they feel involved in the management of tourism.

Checks on the performance and impacts of tourism ensure that while performance has improved, it has not brought adverse changes to the environment or local quality of life.

To achieve this vision, 9 objectives and priorities for action have been identified:

1 ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION

To maintain a high quality environment in the Park, encouraging sound environmental management practices and support for conservation by all those involved in tourism.

Highest priority will be the protection of the environment, both in general and as a resource for tourism. To achieve this:

- there will be regular checks on environmental conditions
- sound planning control will be maintained
- there will be close co-operation with landowners
- the tourism industry will be encouraged and assisted in environmental management through advice, training and certification
- specific projects will be devised to inspire visitors and tourism businesses in their support for conservation
- participation in the Green Tourism Business Scheme (and similar) will be required to qualify for use of the Park Brand

2 WORKING TOGETHER

To ensure effective involvement by all stakeholders in the planning, development and management of tourism in the Park, and to maintain good communication between them.

The Visitor Service, Information and Tourism (VISIT) Forum already meets regularly, bringing together representatives of the tourism industry, environmental organisations and local communities. Wider and stronger communication will be achieved by:

- working with local tourism organisations
- an annual open meeting
- developing effective use of newsletters and information technology

3 MARKETING

To raise awareness of the area as a premier, year-round rural tourism destination in the UK, recognising its outstanding natural heritage and its National Park status.

A new Cairngorms National Park Brand has been launched, and guidelines are available for its use by high quality enterprises. In addition:

- the dedicated Visitor Guide to the Park will be retained
- high-profile, but sensitive, coverage will be obtained in relevant VisitScotland promotions
- high priority will be given to creating a truly effective tourism portal website for visitors
- collaborative marketing efforts will be encouraged along the lines of the Walking Festivals leaflet 2005



Rothiemurchus Estate

4 INFORMATION AND INTERPRETATION

To ensure that visitors to the Park are aware of the range of places to visit and things to do throughout the area, and appreciate and respect its special qualities.

Good interpretation, including events, will strengthen understanding of the Park and what it has to offer. This will be achieved through:

- a more pro-active approach to information delivery
- use of the Park Brand in Tourist Information Centres, on visitor signs and all information distribution points
- strengthening the role of Countryside Rangers
- working with tourism businesses to increase their knowledge of the Park to allow better information to be given to their visitors



Ptarmigan, Jimmy Mitchell

5 QUALITY AND WELCOME

To improve and maintain the quality of experience in the Park for all visitors, communities and those working within the tourism industry.

Regular feedback from visitors, businesses and communities will identify quality issues. A consistent level of high quality will be sought across all businesses by:

- requiring participation in relevant inspection schemes to qualify for use of the Park Brand
- encouraging participation in relevant initiatives such as "Pride and Passion"
- encouraging projects to improve facilities and train staff
- giving special attention to facilities and information for disadvantaged and disabled visitors



is a new national movement from the tourism industry created to inspire change. At the moment, some parts of the experience are very special – the scenery and natural environment always deliver. There are also many, many businesses that provide a wonderful time for their visitors. But not all businesses, all the time. The vision for the future aim is to guarantee that Scotland will always deliver something that is memorable for the right reasons.

6 DISTINCTIVENESS AND DISCOVERY

To develop and maintain a wide range of opportunities for visitors to experience and enjoy the special qualities, distinctiveness and natural and cultural heritage of the Park.

- walking will continue as a primary activity in the Park, with a range of easily identified and well-maintained paths to suit all abilities
- visitors will be encouraged to enjoy a wide range of experiences by improving access to outdoor activities, wildlife watching and the area's historic and cultural heritage
- interpretation of land management will be an important theme

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and the rights of Scottish Outdoor Access Code came into effect early in 2005. The Act introduces a right of responsible access and the Code gives guidance on how these rights should be exercised.



Know the Code before you go... Enjoy Scotland's outdoors - responsibly!

Everyone has the right to be on most land and inland water providing they act responsibly. Your access rights and responsibilities are explained fully in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Whether you're in the outdoors or managing the outdoors, the key things are to:

- take responsibility for your own actions
- respect the interests of other people
- care for the environment

Find out more by visiting www.outdooraccess-scotland.com or phoning your local Scottish Natural Heritage office.



Cairngorm Mountain

7 ENTERPRISE AND ECONOMY

To strengthen and maintain the viability of the tourism industry in the Park and the contribution that it makes to the local economy.

- the performance of tourism businesses will be monitored wherever practical, for this, co-operation by individual businesses will be greatly appreciated
- there will be better co-ordination of the delivery of advice and training and also access to financial assistance
- opportunities will be sought, where possible, to address the shortage of local labour
- better information and branding will be used to raise the profile of local produce, to promote its sale to visitors and use in menus



Strathspey Steam Railway, David Gowans

8 VISITOR MANAGEMENT

To encourage an optimum flow and spread of visitors across the Park and minimise adverse social and environmental impact, congestion from visitors and traffic generated by tourism.

The movement and impact of visitors and their cars will be positively influenced by:

- better visitor management and transport planning
- promoting the use of public transport and other ways to explore the area, for example, by bike, on foot, on the water, or by organised coach excursion

9 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

To involve local communities in the planning and development of tourism in the Park and to ensure that it improves and does not diminish their quality of life.

Effective two-way communication will be vital for success. Existing links between the CNPA and local communities will be strengthened, and the co-operation of local organisations will be welcomed. In addition:

- local residents will be actively encouraged to use visitor amenities
- interpretation activity about the special qualities of the Cairngorms should be aimed at and involve local people

RECENT ACTION

The CNPA and its partners have already delivered some of the actions relating to the strategy, including:

Branding: development of the Park Brand, and agreeing criteria for its use by businesses meeting quality and other agreed standards

Print: production and distribution of a Park Visitor Guide, Countryside Events leaflet, Park-wide transport leaflet and Walking Festivals leaflet

Signage: installation of interim metal point-of-entry signs and permanent signs at train stations

Promotion: attendance at VisitScotland Expo to raise awareness of the Park with travel trade operators

Training: delivery of the Cairngorms Connections project for staff of tourism businesses and the *Land Based Business Training* project for land managers involved in tourism



Expo 05



Publications



Interim metal sign

FEEDBACK – WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Tourism is everyone's business – please give us regular feedback on your experiences, ideas, opinions and needs in relation to the Park. This is absolutely crucial to allow the CNPA to track changes in the performance and sustainability of tourism in the Park and to meet the objectives of the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism.

HOW TO KEEP IN TOUCH

The ViSIT Forum

This is the main way to keep in touch with tourism and visitor services development in the Park. (ViSIT stands for Visitor Services, Information and Tourism). The Forum provides advice to the CNPA as it develops policies on visitor services, information and tourism, and also progresses specific projects and initiatives.

How often does ViSIT meet?

About six times per year, at different venues around the Park. Minutes and Papers are accessible on www.cairngorms.co.uk or by contacting the CNPA office.

ViSIT membership and Chair

ViSIT is chaired by a Board Member of the CNPA who is also a B&B owner. Members are from a wide range of tourism interests from the public, private and voluntary/community sectors.

Private sector groups include the Moray Tourism Forum and Royal Deeside and The Mearns Tourism Forum, and there are representatives from hotels, restaurants, visitor attractions including CairnGorm Mountain Ltd, the Highland Folk Museum, wildlife tour operators and outdoor activity providers.

Others represented include VisitScotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Companies, National Trust for Scotland, Forest Enterprise, Scottish Environment LINK and the Association of Cairngorms Community Councils.

CNPA staff involved in tourism

Several CNPA staff are associated with tourism. If you wish to discuss a tourism issue, please call the main office in Grantown on 01479 873535 and you will be directed to the person most able to help.



CNPA tourism & visitor services staff

For a large print version of this leaflet, please contact the
Cairngorms National Park Authority for a copy,
Tel: 01479 873535

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