



Food for Life Planning Day Report

Glenmore Lodge, 23 April 2010



Purpose of the planning day

The Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) and the Soil Association Scotland are jointly researching and developing a Food for Life Development Plan for the Cairngorms National Park. The process of researching and developing the Plan combines desk based research alongside interviews and discussions with stakeholders across the Park and its surrounding areas.

A key stage in this process was to hold a planning day, where interested parties could come together and share their views and thoughts on what needs to be tackled to take forward more production and consumption of local food across the Park. It was also a useful point to reflect on some of the issues arising from the initial research. This report summarises the discussions held on the planning day. A full list of attendees is appended at the end of the report.

Setting the scene

Background and context: Chris Bremner, Sustainable Economy Manager, CNPA

Food plays a fundamental role in all our lives, although not everyone perhaps recognises its importance.

Food production, processing and catering is an essential part of the Park economy - GVA of £400m and around 2,500 employees. Land management underpins the special nature of the National Park, and most other economic sectors are reliant on it.

The food scene has changed enormously over the last five years or so with a growing emphasis on local, provenance and quality. Visitors¹ especially appreciate local produce - 85% said that they wanted to purchase local products according to the Park visitor survey conducted in 2003.

There are well established initiatives within the Park including work undertaken by the Cairngorms Partnership, the Cairngorms Farmers Market and the development of a Park brand. Opportunities to do more clearly exist and scoping work undertaken last year by CNPA has helped to provide a focus. One strong and common theme that emerged during this work was the potential to take a more coordinated approach to food and drink in the Park for:

- Economic opportunities - tourism and strengthening rural communities;
- Social opportunities - education, health, skills and employment;
- Environmental opportunities - appreciating the natural environment and climate change.

Delivering across all these areas in a consistent way offers huge advantages to taking a narrow focus in one. The trick is keeping the links and connections without slowing progress.

Soil Association Scotland and Food for Life in Scotland have recognised this potential and have already made excellent progress in Highland region e.g. with Highland

¹ For the purpose of this report a visitor is defined as anyone who resides outside the Park

Council Catering Service and Glenmore Lodge. Key features of Food for Life's relevance to food and drink in the Park are that it:

- Uses a partnership model for delivery;
- Has strong links with the government's National Food Policy;
- Supports work to develop supply chains;
- Fits perfectly with the Park's function to ensure a collective and coordinated approach to achieve the four aims of the Park - conservation, resource use, access, sustainable economy and communities.

Soil Association Scotland and CNPA are currently consulting with stakeholders throughout the Park to produce a development plan for food and drink in the National Park. This planning day will help inform the production of the plan.

Progress to Date: Dr Eleanor Logan, Head of Soil Association Scotland

Food for Life began as a campaign to improve the quality of school meals across the UK. The Soil Association's Food for Life Catering Mark was developed to support this work, and has been expanded to include work with other public and private caterers. The Catering Mark uses standards for the use of local, seasonal, unprocessed and where possible organic food has three levels of award - Bronze, Silver and Gold.

Highland Council Catering Service was recently awarded a Bronze Catering Mark for their school meals - a fine achievement given the service prepares around 15,000 meals a day for 183 primary schools.

Food for Life Scotland takes the standards set in the Catering Mark forward by providing a framework for the planning and delivery of local food. In accepting that food is not only important for the economy and tourism, but can influence the quality of our lives and our communities, the Soil Association Scotland welcomes being able to work alongside the CNPA on developing a regional approach to food - food which is economically and environmentally sustainable, and embeds a personal understanding and responsibility for health at the heart of the communities across the Park.

In terms of progress to date, CNPA has already looked at some of the issues surrounding food production and consumption in the Park, and identified actions that need to be implemented e.g. a survey of food and drink production and consumption. An initial action plan has also been produced. An action plan needs clear outcomes to work towards. The outcomes identified so far are:

- Increase in production of quality primary produce produced within the Park;
- Increase in use of local suppliers of food across the Park and its surrounding areas;
- Increase in the local food economy e.g. new businesses developed, increased productivity of current businesses;
- Reduction in food miles and food waste, and contributing to a low carbon Park;
- Improvement in the health of those living within the Park through adoption of healthy and sustainable diets;
- Strengthening local communities through involvement in a range of activities and strategies.

Soil Association Scotland's role to date has been to test how we would deliver these outcomes by speaking with a range of people and businesses including in food producers, food processors, food and tourism businesses, people who are interested in community growing and people involved in promoting healthy diets. These discussions have highlighted barriers that need to be addressed. These include:

- Gaps in produce being produced in the Park e.g. pork, poultry, eggs and vegetables;
- Challenges of the Park's climate and landscape;
- Difficulties in distributing local food across the Park, particularly relevant to smaller producers;
- Low levels of consumption of locally produced food within the Park;
- Lack of accessibility and availability of local food within in the Park;
- Lack of recognition of the quality and value of the food currently being produced in the Park.

The planning day is a key part of this work. The workshops will look at the above issues and generate ideas around what practical things could be put into place to enable more production, processing, and consumption of local food and increase awareness of the importance of local food.

Presentations

A commitment to local food: David Young, The Cross Restaurant

David Young runs the Cross Restaurant in Kingussie. The Cross has been in business for 25 years, and has been included in the AA, Good Food, and Michelin guides. The restaurant's food purchasing policy is straightforward. It is led by the seasons and the preference is to buy local. For David "local" reflects the current situation in terms of availability of quality produce. He has a commitment to sourcing locally, but also has to look wider. If the produce isn't available locally or isn't up to scratch, he looks to the rest of Scotland, then to the rest of the UK, and only then to Europe.



The Cross, Restaurant with Rooms of the Year 2009

David noted that they currently deal with around 30 food suppliers, which has its challenges. Only five of these 30 are in the Park, and half are Scottish. David's was clear about the reasons for sourcing local food:

- By buying locally we reduce food miles and thus our carbon footprint;
- By buying locally we shorten the food chain and help to meet our own requirements for buying the highest possible quality of seasonal fresh produce;
- By buying locally we help to establish a more locally based food economy;
- By buying locally we help to create jobs and keep local producers in business;
- In establishing a local food supply chain, local people will work together for change, or should that be “for a change”?;
- And just as importantly for The Cross, it’s what our customers want and expect.”

David highlighted some of the issues which present barriers to sourcing more locally;

- The quality of the local food can vary, and sometimes does not meet the standards of the Cross;
- It is hard to make contact with local/small scale producers, as often telephone calls will not be returned, and when contact is made there can be a lot of persuasion needed to secure a deal;
- Smaller producers are often put-off by restaurants, as they can be seen to be ‘too difficult’;
- Transport of produce is often expensive and unreliable;
- Packaging disposal is an issue, as multiple suppliers means multiple packages;
- Some produce is hard to find with in the Park e.g. salad, honey, dairy, wild boar, and fresh bread.

Experience with local food: Calum Buchanan of Buchanan Food

Calum was a farm vet for 20 years, mostly working in dairy before moving into hospitality. He owned two rosette restaurants on the Moray coast for four years, and in 2003 started a catering business on Deeside. From 2006 to the end of 2009, Calum and his wife, Val, set up and ran the kitchen at the new Finzean Farm Shop, and at the end of February 2010 opened a new bistro at Woodend Arts Centre in Banchory alongside the catering business.



Calum, Val, Woodend Barn and members of the Buchanan team

Calum began by saying that local food was very important to his business, but recognised worldwide food trade has and always will exist. Therefore, local food has to be better quality and/or unique.

Local producers can supply individual customers direct (usually through farmers markets) the food service sector or supermarkets, but need to engage more effectively with catering businesses.

To supply and let catering businesses work out menus, producers need to think about:

- Consistent supply - deliver the goods once ordered and let businesses know when produce will not be available;
- Volume - small amounts intermittently will not work;
- Discount - the bigger the value, the better the discount that should be offered.

Calum cited two examples of how producers could make it easier to supply businesses.

- Dinnet Estate - smokehouse provides 1kg catering packs at a discount to 100g retail packs. They also provide monthly lists of vegetable availability and email weekly for an order.
- Finzean Estate - emails when beef and game are available and give a quantity discount. Hedge (the wonderfully named gamekeeper) provides updates with his work and what is likely to be available.

Calum gave the following tips for businesses:

- Know your producers - this is about making and maintaining effective two way communication links;
- Check out slowfood.com and support artisan producers.

Calum concluded by saying that food was a major aspect of tourism in the Park and therefore the tourist boards and CPNA should support businesses by:

- Producing a database of who produces what, where and when;
- Providing assistance/advice on distribution;
- Providing training on local produce to staff.

Summary of key points from comments and questions from participants

Following the presentation, the participants were able to ask questions and make comments. A healthy discussion followed on challenging whether local food was more expensive, why the presenters did not make more effort to source local food and some of the difficulties for producers, and those trying to sell local food including red tape and bureaucracy. This discussion was a useful starting point to the workshops which highlighted the following:

- There is a need for a food guide to the Park;
- There is room for improvement in communication between producers, suppliers, processors, and traders;
- Local food can cost more and is widely perceived as being more expensive;
- There could be a better time for chefs and restaurants to meet with suppliers, as in a 'trader's market' - the farmers market is not an ideal time for those in the restaurant business to get away from their business.

The delegates then broke into separate workshop groups to discuss the following topics.

- 1) Developing food tourism opportunities in the National Park and increasing demand: promotion and marketing of National Park produce.
- 2) 'Eat local, eat well': inspiring the local community to embrace local food and drink.
- 3) Increasing food production and processing in the National Park and distributing local food: issues and solutions.

Workshop 1: Developing food tourism opportunities in the National Park and increasing demand

Context

Putting more local food onto the plate across tourism businesses and increasing the amount bought by visitors to the area can only be achieved if people want to buy the food, appreciate its quality and know where they can buy it from. This also applies to the Park's resident population. These objectives rely on consistent and effective promotion and marketing of local produce. Key issues identified by initial research include:

- Visitors are not connected to food and drink produced in the Park;
- Tourism businesses are not fully connected to local produce and the value it can add i.e. are not currently using as much local produce as much as they could;
- Food and drink produced in the Park are not being used to provide opportunities for visitors to learn more about the area and its unique qualities;
- Lack of recognition of the quality and value of food produced in the Park;
- Lack of awareness of locally produced food by the Park's resident population.

How do we increase the consumption of local food?

- Getting consumers excited by local food is key to demand, but requires better public education, which is a long-term issue.
- There are two distinct market opportunities within the Park - residents and visitors.
- Visitors are often willing to pay more (over 85% of visitors in the last tourism survey said that they wanted to purchase local items special to the Park).
- Barriers to increasing consumption include:
 - Local good food is often perceived as expensive - there is a need to demonstrate to consumers the differentiation and added value to products e.g. locally produced, healthy etc;
 - For local consumers, local supermarkets offer the ease of a 'one stop shop', unlike many food businesses selling good local food which specialise in specific types of products;

- If EU food labeling regulations are extended to freshly prepared meals served to the public, it could prove to be extremely onerous especially for small businesses such as B&Bs.
- There is a need to acknowledge the importance of families living in and visiting the Park, and meet the need for family-friendly eateries. Fast food need not be unhealthy e.g. venison burgers. Therefore, there is a need for a mix of eateries selling good local food to suit all types of visitors and local consumers.
- Schools are an excellent way of getting children enthused about good local food, and in turn changing their families' eating habits.

How do we engage businesses who are not already selling 'good local food'?

- Production of a food guide for visitors and residents would help. This might also encourage more businesses to sell local food as a new market opportunity.
- A directory for producers and food businesses would significantly improve linkages in the supply chain. Many producers and food businesses are unaware of who supplies what, and who wants what.
- The farmers market is often a good route for increasing food businesses access to local producers, perhaps more could be made of this.



The Cairngorm Farmers Market, September 2009

- There is potential for an interactive 'virtual' group for producers and food businesses to communicate more effectively. This could include a monthly newsletter and information sharing e.g. who has what to sell.
- There is the issue that at present no dairy and associated products are produced in the Park, and it is often not financially viable to transport 'local' products into the Park. Could producers use the train as a cost effective method of delivery and distribution?

How should we promote and market food to visitors and residents?

- Food festivals are a good way of promoting food to a wide audience, and often a successful way of increasing visitor spend, especially if held in the shoulder months.
- Food destinations can also be linked to other aspects of tourism e.g. visitor attractions and whisky trails.

- There is also scope within the Park to offer combined packages e.g. B&Bs with farm visits and cooking classes.
- Anecdotal evidence suggests that many chefs working in the Park would like to improve their skills. Up-skilling could be delivered through the Federation of Scottish Chefs, chef away days and mentoring.

Key actions identified by the workshop

- Production of a food directory for businesses and a food guide for visitors and residents.
- Creation of a food group to enable networking and communication, possibly an electronic/virtual version or discussion forum.
- Training/up-skilling of local chefs and restaurant staff.

Workshop 2: 'Eat local, eat well': inspiring the local community to embrace local food and drink

Context

A common theme running through initial research conducted with stakeholders is that there is a need for cultural change around buying and eating local food, and a need to build a pride in the food produced in the Park. Key issues identified by the research include:

- Many of our core cooking skills have been lost within the last generation;
- Our shopping habits have greatly changed, leading to a lack of cooking and menu planning skills;
- We live on a convenience diet which is fuelled by supermarket shopping and the availability of processed food;
- There is popular perception that local food is more expensive and therefore not available to those on a low income;
- It is difficult to get local businesses to stock local products since there is access to cheaper meat from outside the Park.

How could the local resident population be inspired to buy and eat more local food?

- Skye & Lochalsh Food Link is a good model of support for the food sector which also helps the local community access food. It is a peer led model which has perhaps helped to build its credibility.
- More communication and collaboration is required between producers and food businesses.

- There needs to be less bureaucracy for those trying to sell local food e.g. red tape and licensing around the selling of food and running markets and events.
- Need to tackle the popular perception that local food is expensive.
- Need more education in schools to get students cooking and eating together. (This is easier in primary schools.)
- Need for more publicity in local areas for local food, and encourage people to buy and understand more about the benefits of local food. Tasting and samplings would help build understanding, and would be an opportunity to connect with consumer.
- Need for a database of food suppliers, so buyers can make informed decisions.

What would improve the availability of local food?

- There are empty shops in the Park - could these be used as temporary outlets to sell more local food?
- Local food is often more expensive for local people. How can we facilitate bulk-buying of quality local produce? One solution could be on-line ordering. This would also provide convenience.
- Until supply chain issues are resolved, meat producers in Cairngorm cannot increase production. Work needs to be done to match supply and demand in all sectors of the market for different cuts of meat to maximise use of whole carcass - e.g. cheaper cuts for public sector market matched to more expensive cuts for restaurant and private market.

Key actions identified by the workshop

- Events will help build a food culture and raise awareness of local food e.g. food awareness days and food festivals.
- An online database of what is available locally is needed to help guide us all in what we can buy where.
- Working with schools is very important to build a food culture and embed food into the curriculum. Children and young people then become educators.

Workshop 3: Increasing production and distributing local food

Context

Stakeholders who have fed into the research process to date have consistently highlighted that the distribution of food is an issue i.e. getting the food from the farm to the shop, hotel or family dinner plate. Key issues identified by the research include:

- The financial cost of distribution and the time involved for producers and processors in developing and managing their own distribution networks;

- The financial cost and person time for small producers and processors undertaking their own distribution was prohibitive in establishing new markets;
- Transport is often unreliable;
- Anecdotal information that hotel chains utilise centralised buying through large wholesale distributors.

How do we improve distribution without re-inventing the wheel?

- Use existing distribution networks e.g. Cairngorm Brewery. Could use empty return journeys to bring back produce that is located outside the Park.
- Distribution is potentially about more than mere delivery. It can include sales so it is important that any distributor knows about the product.
- Drawing on experience from elsewhere e.g. Fortieth's has a good distribution model used for Argyll and the Skye & Lochalsh Food Links project has a dedicated service. What will work best in the Cairngorms?
- Rather than invent a new distributor, work with an established one e.g. Williamsons already distributes. Could they be a potential distributor for producers in the Cairngorms and around the Highlands?
 - One distributor cuts down on the number of suppliers a buyer has to deal with.
 - They could provide a sales role for the small producer.
 - Distributors must have product knowledge training and its product traceability is important particularly in relation to meat.
 - Sales assistance required for small producers.
- Small producers may need brokering between themselves and the distributor who is then dealing with the caterers.
- The idea of a Cairngorms Sales Team working for the small producer to promote and sell local food, borne out of companies who have a telesales team weekly contacting suppliers to obtain orders. Could be public sector led but driven by the private sector.

How do we increase food production in the Park?

- There is a need to make the supply chain more effective e.g. butchers are unable to source local meat.
- Viability is a huge factor when assessing increasing food production as many food producers are already operating on low margins. It should not be about increasing the number of producers, but increasing the produce available by working with existing producers.
- Food labeling is an issue. Training would be helpful.
- Visitors want to experience local food. How do we make this easier for them? A food guide?

- Developing a producers' co-operative could be a solution with a specific aim of increasing production including addressing the issue of produce gaps. Would a processing centre that is Government assisted, help local producers (examples of this can be found in Wales and France). How can this be made economically viable?

Key actions identified by the workshop

- There is a need for a "grouping" to drive local food forward - perhaps a local food network?
- There is need for a directory connecting producers and traders to catering businesses, and a food guide for consumers.

Summary conclusions from the planning day

Information

The need to improve both industry and consumer knowledge of the availability of food and drink within the Park is consistently cited by producers and food businesses as essential. It is generally agreed that two "quick win" solutions would be to produce:

- A definitive Park directory detailing who produces what, where and when with information on how to access the produce;
- A guide for visitors and the Park's residents detailing where to buy good local food e.g. shops, farms, restaurants, visitor attractions etc.

Keeping the directory and guide up to date would be essential. The creation of a food group, with possibly an electronic/virtual version or discussion forum, was also cited as a positive way to facilitate increased networking and communication between producers and businesses.

Marketing

The consultation process has identified a range of initiatives (e.g. food festivals, food orientated holiday packages, a food guide etc) to increase the public consumption of local food within the Park. The consultation process has also highlighted the importance of embedding food and drink as an integral part of the overall visitor experience to generate economic benefits through increased visitor stay and spend. In addition, it also raised a number of issues relating to barriers that marketing needs to address e.g. the perception that local food is more expensive.

It is clearly evident from the consultation process that there is a need to produce a comprehensive marketing plan for food and drink within the Park, including actions that are aligned to marketing the Park as a visitor destination.

Distribution

Distribution of food and drink within the Park is a major issue. For producers, especially small businesses, the cost of and the time involved in developing and

managing their own distribution networks is consistently cited as a major barrier to accessing markets.

In particular, supplying tourism businesses faces major challenges. For example, there is anecdotal evidence that hotel chains were utilising centralised buying through large wholesale distributors. It is also apparent that there is a need to establish a distribution network across the many smaller scale businesses operating within the Park, especially B&Bs.

Structural issues surrounding distribution include lack of finishing and processing facilities, unreliable transport and a shortage of retail outlets.

It is evident through discussions with stakeholders that further information on distribution issues is required in order to identify potential interventions. In addition, there are distribution models currently being used in other regions with similar challenges - e.g. Skye Food Links on the Isle of Skye - as well as local initiatives e.g. Strathspey Mushrooms within the Park. Further research into these and other models will also help to inform solutions.

Training

The need for developing skills in the food and drink sector is a recurring theme. For example, upskilling for chefs and individuals directly engaged in preparing and cooking food is identified as a key action. Anecdotal feedback suggests that the intensely busy nature of catering requires creative solutions for continuous professional development e.g. mentoring, away days and staff swaps. The provision of training in food labeling, menu planning and product knowledge is also cited as a key action.

CNPA is currently reviewing its training provision, and through its commitment to supporting food and drink production, there is considerable scope to address these and other skill gaps within the sector.

Education

A common theme running through the consultation process is that there needs to be a significant cultural change around the buying and eating of food through education in its widest sense - both in schools and communities.

There is significant recognition of the success of initiatives such as Eco-Schools and Crofting Connections which are in engaging children in food-growing and healthy eating activities. Crofting Connections is a curriculum-linked educational project, which engages children and their crofting communities in growing their own food and learning about their local heritage. The project, which is currently working with 70 schools across the 'crofting counties', provides a model, which could be adopted and delivered across schools and communities throughout the Park.

Contact

If you would like to contribute towards the consultation process please contact:
Dr Eleanor Logan - Email elogan@soilassociation.org Tel 0131 666 2474

Producers who provided lunch for the planning day event

- Achnahannet Farm Produce - home baking and eggs: Tel 01479 851 324
- Cairngorm Pork - sausages: www.cairngormpork.co.uk
- Cambus O May - cheese: www.cambusomay.com
- Delfour Smokery - hot smoked trout fillets and roasted organic brown trout crowdie - delfourhatchery@aol.com
- Mountain Café - bread: www.mountaincafe-aviemore.co.uk
- Wark Farm - pork pies: jen@warkfarm.co.uk
- Glenfeshie Seafoods Limited - chowder: glen.feshie@btinternet.com



Mountain Café, Cambus O May and Cairngorm Pork.

Attendees at the Food for Life planning day

F & D providers	Contact	Location	Contact details
Brooklynn B&B	Alan & Sylvia Woodier	Grantown on Spey	brooklynn@woodier.com
Buchanan Foods	Calum Buchanan	Aboyne	calum@buchananfood.com
Cairngorm Mountain	Dougie Somerville	Aviemore	dougie.somerville@cairngormmountain.org
Cairngorm Reindeer Centre	Emily Singleton	Aviemore	tilly@cairngormreindeer.co.uk
The Dulaig B&B	Carol Bulloch	Grantown	info@thedulaig.com
Glenmore Lodge	Matt Dare	Aviemore	Matt.Dare@glenmorelodge.org.uk
Highland Wildlife Park	Daska MacKintosh	Kincraig	dmackintosh@rzss.org.uk
The Cross	David Young	Kingussie	relax@thecross.co.uk
F & D producers	Contact	Location	Contact details
Balliefurth Farm	Alistair MacLennan	Nethy Bridge	a.maclennan@totalise.co.uk
Achnahannet Farm Produce	Gillian Gordon	Dulnain Bridge	gordon208@btinternet.com
Roths Jam	Victoria Dawes	Roths	steve@dawes1986.freeseve.co.uk
Delfour Hatchery	Craig & Heather Ireland	Kincraig	delfourhatchery@aol.com
Cairngorm Brewery	Sam Faircliff	Aviemore	sam@cairngormbrewery.com

Organisations	Contact	Location	Contact details
Cairngorms Farmers Market	Fiona Young		organisercfma@aol.com
Highland Council	Norma Murray	Inverness	Norma.Murray@highland.gov.uk
SRBPA	Drew MacFarlane Slack	Ballachulish	drew.mcfarlaneslack@srpba.com
SAOS	George Noble		george.noble@saos.co.uk
Gourmet Academy	Lydie Bocquillon	Kingussie	froglady@kingussie.biz
Moray Council	Pierre Masson		Tel: 01343 563485
Wild Thinking	Jillian Robertson	Kingussie	Tel: 1540 661502
Food on Film	Helen Graham	Kingussie	www.kingussiefoodonfilm.co.uk

Businesses and organisations which have indicated an interest in a Food for Life Development Plan that could not attend the planning day event.

F & D providers	Contact	Location
Andersons	Steve Anderson	Boat of Garten
Glen Tanar Estate	Claire Bruce	Glen Tanar
Mountain Café	Kirsten Gilmour	Aviemore
Mountain Innovations	Rebecca Field	Boat of Garten
Ord Ban	Ross & Polly Deans	Aviemore
F & D producers	Contact	Location
Alvie Estate	Jamie Williamson/Vince Watson	Kincraig
Alvie Strawberries	John Christie	Kincraig
Cambus O May Cheese	Ivana Petrovich	Torphins
Millers of Speyside	Louise Aubery	Grantown on Spey
Deeside Water	Martin Simpson	Ballater
Organisations	Contact	Location
Royal Deeside DMO	John Carnie	Ballater
Beinn Sealladh	Barbara Paterson	Nethy Bridge