

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: CAIRNGORMS ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN

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Purpose

To consider the results of the consultation undertaken between June and September 2019 and seek the Board's approval of finalised Economic Action Plan 2019 – 2022.

Recommendation

That the Board

- a) consider the feedback received during the consultation
 - b) approve the Cairngorms Economic Action Plan 2019 – 2022
 - c) agree to nominate a Board member to Chair the Cairngorms Economic Steering Group
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Background and Strategic Context

1. When the current National Park Partnership Plan 2017 – 2022 (NPPP) was prepared in 2017 a specific “Priority” and “Agenda for Action” on Economic Development was agreed. These sat alongside a comprehensive set of Policies to guide future management of the Park (many of which concerned economic development) and a list of Capital Investment Priorities. Several of the other eight priorities in the Plan (including Housing and Visitor Infrastructure) are directly relevant to managing and promoting the economy of the Park. The NPPP therefore contains the strategy for economic development in the Park.
2. Following discussion with partners (including the Cairngorms Business Partnership (CBP), Highlands and Islands Enterprise, local authorities, etc.) a draft Economic Action Plan was prepared to implement the strategy. The Board approved the Plan for consultation in December 2018.

Public Consultation

3. Consultation took place from 26 June to 20 September and involved:
 - a) Direct email of the draft Plan to interested parties
 - b) Press release and leaflet drop to local businesses
 - c) Social media campaign using Twitter and Facebook posts
 - d) Blogs by Convener and senior staff
4. To promote discussion the following events and meetings were held:
 - a) Two meetings were organised for CBP members in Grantown and Braemar – CNPA staff attended to facilitate discussion and CNPA Board members attended to listen to the views expressed.
 - b) CNPA offered to meet with all Business Associations within the Park. CNPA staff and Board members attended two meetings – with Ballater and with the Grantown Business Association.
 - c) Meetings with individual bodies on request – including, for example, Scottish Land and Estates, Federation of Small Businesses, Growbiz and Scottish Enterprise.
5. To support the consultation the CNPA Convener and Deputy Convener spent seven days out in the Park, meeting and visiting businesses along with locally elected

members and senior staff. The visits focused on the main settlements and included Newtonmore, Kingussie, Aviemore, Grantown, Tomintoul, Braemar and Ballater. In total, members met directly with over 45 businesses including several significant employers (e.g. Cairngorms Brewery, McGowan's and Wilderness Scotland) and the managers and front-line staff of many small shops and premises. A summary of what was heard is provided at **Annex I**.

Changes to the Action Plan

6. In the light of the consultation feedback the Economic Action Plan has been modified as explained below and is attached for approval at **Annex 3**. The emphasis has been kept on identification of the actions that are most important and likely to be delivered within the plan period.

7. In relation to the first question asked in the consultation (about data, trends and opportunities) the Strategic Context has been updated to include:
 - a) a new section on the importance of towns and villages
 - b) clarity about the CNPA response to climate emergency
 - c) strengthened section of the need to invest in natural capital and to highlight the links between prosperous businesses and nature
 - d) improved cross-references to the data we hold already
 - e) references to some new research (e.g. on short-term lets)
 - f) references to some new strategic work (e.g. update on Scottish Government Rural Economy Action Group and SCDI Rural Commission)
 - g) the proposed evidence-gathering phase that is about to start for preparation of next National Park Partnership Plan
 - h) a number of small changes (including better references to community-led development and social enterprises)

8. The second question in the consultation focused on the proposed actions in the Plan. The overall structure, using the five themes, was retained and changes made as follows:
 - a) Theme 1: Building on economic strengths
 - i. Clarification of links to the Tourism Action Plan and Charter for Sustainable Tourism

 - b) Theme 2: Supporting and attracting business
 - i. Consolidation of all housing delivery actions under this theme
 - ii. Addition of a new action on control of short-term lets

- c) Theme 3: Education, training and skills development
 - i. New action to promote connections between business and environment
 - ii. Addition of links to the national Rural Skills Action Plan

 - d) Theme 4: Infrastructure and capital investment
 - i. Increased emphasis in the section on capital investment on prioritizing investment in natural capital
 - ii. The summary of progress and plans has been updated

 - e) Theme 5: Community and enterprise
 - i. A new action around development of a network of three Smart Villages
 - ii. A new action about the Cairngorms Young Action project
 - iii. A new action around promotion of collaboration with Business Associations and emphasis on town centres
 - iv. A new action about the transnational, LEADER-funded project promoting active travel and transport integration – the TICK Project
9. In relation the third question in the consultation, on Delivery and Monitoring of the Plan, changes were made as follows:
- a) CNPA Board member to chair the Economic Steering Group
 - b) Addition of Federation of Small Businesses to the Steering Group
 - c) New emphasis on bringing together Business Associations and helping the focus on Town Centres
 - d) Development of indicators of progress at first meeting of Economic Steering Group
10. The Economic Action Plan is a partnership plan. The CNPA will consider its resource allocation for our contribution to delivering the plan as part of our normal annual operational plan budget discussions in March 2020.

Next Steps

- 11. Subject to Board approval, the Economic Action Plan will be subject to some modest graphic design work before being published online.

- 12. The first meeting of the Steering Group will be convened in late January 2020.

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