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Memorandum of Understanding between
Cairngorms National Park Authority
And
Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland

1. Purpose

The Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) and Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland (OATS) share a mutual benefit through collaboration in the delivery of high quality access opportunities for residents of and visitors to the Cairngorms National Park.

This MoU sets out the ways in which CNPA and OATS will work together to the benefit of the Cairngorms National Park, setting out the strategic relationship over and above individual year's operational agreements. CNPA recognises and is aware of OATS project activity beyond the Cairngorms National Park and nothing in this MoU restricts these or other future projects in other areas. Equally, in entering into this MoU, OATS recognises that some ongoing commitment to work in the Cairngorms and adequately resource this work from within its staffing structures will be required to satisfy both the expectations set out in this document and also the expectations of CNPA as a continuing member of the charity.

This MoU sets out how the two organisations will collaborate on work within the Cairngorms National Park.

The MoU recognises a series of mutual benefits in partnership collaboration between OATS and CNPA. The charitable objectives of OATS are a clear fit with the delivery priorities for access opportunities within the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP), while the operation of the charity within the Cairngorms affords an effective means of bringing third party investment into the Cairngorms National Park which would not otherwise be possible. The work and networks of each organisation bring significant knowledge and experience to support the other.

2. Timescale

This MoU covers the period until 31 March 2022, with the potential for extension on the basis of written agreement by both parties to the MoU once the likely direction of travel of the next Cairngorms NPPP is better understood.

3. Strategic Context

Collaboration between CNPA and OATS to date has delivered a high quality access network throughout the National Park. The National Park Partnership Plan for 2017-22 sets out the priorities for the next five years. These include completing and maintaining the

remaining strategic links in the access network, maintaining and continuing to enhance the network we now have, as well as promoting more use and participation.

CNPA and OATs are both committed to the common goals of:

- Maintaining and enhancing an outstanding access network in the National Park;
- Encouraging more use of the network and participation in physical activity;
- Developing the skills base necessary to maintain and enhance the access infrastructure;
- Engaging people's support for the access network including financial, volunteering and other contributions of support and promotion;

4. Priority areas for Collaboration

a) *The Mountains and the People Project & Cairngorms Mountain Heritage Project*

OATS was lead body for delivering these major projects with a 10 yr commitment to the major funder to maintain paths. The period of this MoU sees the capital investment period of The Mountains and The People Project come to an end and paths created under this project, like those in the earlier Cairngorms Mountain Heritage Project, enter into their maintenance commitment period. CNPA has an interest in ensuring the path network improvements achieved through OATS' work on these projects are sustainably maintained, while it is important for OATS' reputation as a charity working in this sector that it is seen to be delivering on its maintenance commitments and providing ongoing, legacy benefit to the public.

CNPA will continue to provide agreed support and a funding contribution, and participate actively in governance and promotion of the positive legacy of these projects.

OATS will continue to benefit from enhancement to its reputation as an effective charity delivering large scale, long term, multi-objective and sustainable programmes of work. OATS will develop maintenance schedules, interact appropriately with land managers, and plan financially for the ongoing investment in appropriate levels of maintenance resources into these paths created from its project investment.

CNPA will provide funding support of 40% of the total maintenance cost incurred by OATS in the National Park on paths that they are the primary responsible body in any one year, up to an agreed maximum to be determined annually (CNPA is subject to an annual budget allocation). The 2020/21 maximum contribution being £20,000 (for £50,000 total maintenance expenditure incurred by OATS).

b) Long Distance Routes

The CNPA priorities are continuing to maintain and improve the Speyside Way in the National Park as both a long distance route and a community link for residents and visitors; working with Highland Council and Moray Council and partners to promote the entire route.

Where opportunities arise CNPA will work with OATS to secure funding and route specific delivery agreements to upgrade and improve Speyside Way and potentially other long distance paths listed below.

OATS will benefit through a direct association with development and maintenance of a recognised and valued Long Distance Route network, enhancing the charity's reputation and broadening its potential base for development of future business.

CNPA will support the work of partners, including Sustrans and local communities, in developing NMU routes and Deeside Way, Dava Way and Catevan Trail, and where opportunities arise will involve OATS.

c) Other Path maintenance

CNPA and OATS will jointly develop and agree an annual maintenance programme identifying existing commitments, priorities and funding options.

The maintenance priorities for CNPA and OATS resources are those routes for which the organisations have a legal obligation and other priorities will be agreed on an annual basis.

CNPA and OATS will work collaboratively to effectively use volunteers to both maintain and 'audit' paths.

OATS will benefit as a charity seen to be caring for the path networks it is closely associated with creating and in some cases is committed to maintaining, enhancing its reputation and demonstrating delivery of its charitable objectives to any external scrutiny.

d) Income Generation

CNPA will continue support OATS in the management, improvement and construction of rural car parks in the Cairngorms where the income generated is reinvested in path maintenance and improvement in National Park.

e) *Promotion and Awareness Raising*

CNPA and OATS will collaborate on opportunities to generate positive media coverage and awareness of their activities and the partnership.

CNPA and OATS will co-ordinate with other partners through an annual communications plan summarising opportunities for joint promotion.

Both CNPA and OATS will benefit through enhancing awareness and support for their activity.

5. Relationship and Finance Management

CNPA and OATS both recognise the strategic importance of their relationship to delivery of the National Park Partnership Plan and share an expectation of ongoing dialogue. In addition to operational reporting and communication both organisations will maintain regular communication about strategic direction including:

- Senior CNPA officers will attend an OATS board meeting annually to co-ordinate business planning;
- OATS and CNPA board members will meet to discuss strategic direction and opportunities.
- Publishing a brief joint annual summary of the work delivered for board members and wider promotion
- CNPA will on the basis of this ongoing partnership collaboration retain membership of OATS, supporting overall governance and sustainability of the charity
- OATS will provide a quarterly update of path work agreed and supported by CNPA including expenditure incurred

The nominated officers responsible for relationship management and agreeing any changes to the MoU are:

- Pete Crane, Head of Visitor Services, CNPA
- Dougie Baird, Chief Executive, OATS

In the event of significant strategic issues arising, the Chairs and Chief Executives of OATS and CNPA will meet to resolve any dispute arising from delivery or interpretation under this MoU which these nominated officers are unable to resolve.

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