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CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

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**Title: Managing for Visitors 2020/21**

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**Purpose: To update members**

### **Introduction**

1. This information paper provides a brief summary of the work partnership undertaken in the Cairngorms National Park to encourage visitors to have a safe and enjoyable experience as the area opened during the various and ongoing phases of Covid-19 'lockdown' and 're-opening'.
2. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the National Park received around 2 million visits per year, a quarter of them from overseas. Tourism supported 29% of the local economy and 43% of employment. While 2020 visitor numbers were almost negligible during lockdown, the post-lockdown period saw a fairly strong return of domestic visitors. Key countryside sites saw an increase in footfall compares with previous years, probably driven by near residents. The five local authorities that make up the National Park, together with the cities of Aberdeen & Dundee comprise 1.2 million residents.

### **Partner and Community Engagement**

3. In spring 2020 CNPA set up two visitor working groups that continue to virtually meet fortnightly to discuss collective work and support:-
  - a. **Cairngorms Tourism Emergency Response Group** comprising CNPA, Cairngorms Business Partnership (CBP), Visit Aberdeenshire, Moray Speyside, Visit Scotland, Local Authorities, Highlands and Island Enterprise
  - b. **Managing for People Partners** a wide ranging group including public private and third sector land managers, LA's, tourism industry and Police Scotland
4. CBP and CNPA have hosted quarterly virtual meetings (May, Aug and Dec 2020, and March 2021) to update and engage with the following groups:-
  - a. Local Authority Councilors
  - b. Community Councilors
  - c. Residents
5. CNPA has also participated in specific community interest and working groups when asked including; Newtonmore Community Council and Mar Area Partnership.

6. CNPA and CBP have also attended **Scottish Government National Groups** including; Communications, Infrastructure, Outdoor Access, and Staycation Red Team – *planning for reopening 2021*.
7. This engagement work has directly lead to the activity summarised below.

### Managing for Visitors Plans

8. Live plans for key rural areas of the National Park were produced in 2020 and again this year. These areas identify the key work that needs to be undertaken to encourage safe, responsible and enjoyable access to the Cairngorms. They are regularly discussed at partnership meetings. The current plans are on CNPA website [Managing for Visitors - Cairngorms National Park Authority](#)

### Visitor Messaging

9. CBP with CNPA support developed in 2020 the **#CairngormsTogether** messaging that has four key positive requests:
  - **Understand** the latest guidance
  - **Plan** ahead
  - **Adapt** to the situation
  - **Be kind** to each other
10. This continues to be widely used to encourage visitors to safely enjoy the National Park and is now linked with the national call to **#RespectProtectEnjoy**.
11. Key areas that visitors needed to know were open are covered on CNPA and CBP websites
  - a. Public Toilets
  - b. Car Parks
  - c. Visitor Attractions
12. Visitor information on what facilities are open has been further improved by CBP on the What's Open page [What's Open in the Cairngorms National Park \(visitcairngorms.com\)](#)
13. Both CNPA and CBP have good communication with 'regular visitors' to the National Park but less contact with what was perceived in 2020 as being both a new, younger, 'near resident' audience. In order to engage with this audience a new video on responsible camping was commissioned and 'Barry' a resident, un-commissioned, also produced an engaging video:
  - CNPA funded [Cairngorms: The Spirit of Wild Camping - YouTube](#)
  - 'Barry' litter (Independent) [Don't be like Barry - YouTube](#)

14. CNPA and CBP communications staff meet two weekly, and websites and social media are regularly updated. National media interviewed the team throughout 2020, initially with a positive focus on planning for reopening but latterly with a focus on minority irresponsible behavior. Both CBP and CNPA has purchased 'advertising' on social media to better engage with the perceived new audience.
15. CBP are again developing videos promoting safe visits to the National Park in 2021, and CNPA has filmed 'Make it Yours' aimed at visitor facing staff. This presentation shares why the Cairngorms is a National Park, why it is a special place and what, based on visitor surveys, people are likely to want to see and do while visiting [Introducing the Cairngorms National Park – Make It Yours - YouTube](#)
16. During 2020 an increase in littering, human waste and irresponsible fires was observed and as the Access Authority CNPA has redesigned the **Tread Lightly in Cairngorms** campaign to focus on these issues. CNPA has offered Green Recovery Fund grant to six communities to support litter picks and will be promoting **Keep Scotland Beautiful Summer Clean**, May 28<sup>th</sup> - June 20<sup>th</sup>.
17. Six rural areas within the National Park were regularly over capacity in 2020 and CNPA continues to focus on promoting the communities around the National Park, that remained relatively quiet, and the 666 miles of core paths, many of which are shown on 17 community path leaflets: the most popular visitor activities are sightseeing (61%) and going for a short walk (57%).
18. Anticipating an increase in **campervans** CNPA has supported CBP in promoting areas of the National Park where campervans are safe and welcome including waste disposal sites. Data to 'go live' at the end of April 21.
19. CNPA rented in 2020 two variable road signs for Deeside and one for Glenmore to provide up to date information to visitors to these areas such as '*Loch Muick car park full*'. These signs have now been purchased for 2021. CNPA Rangers are also working with Aberdeenshire Council to coordinate seven day messaging on AC variable signs.

### **Ranger Services**

20. In anticipation of increased visitor pressures CNPA appointed, trained and managed nine seasonal rangers in 2020 that were 'out there' encouraging visitor to have a safe, responsible and enjoyable time from June to October. Scottish Government funding has been secured to continue this employment from March to October 2021 along with a further five full time CNPA rangers currently being appointed. **Annex I** lists a summary of this year's current activity.
21. CNPA has also secured funding to train and employ five Kickstart Youth Placement opportunities for rangers – offering a start in this type of career for young adults aged 18 – 24 on Universal Credit. Four are in post.

22. CNPA has increased its grant in aid to six partner ranger services (private estates or charitable trusts) by 10% in 2021 to further support partners in managing for visitors.
23. Forestry and Land Scotland, National Trust for Scotland, Nature Scotland and Balmoral Estate are all employing addition rangers/visitor staff this year. The National Park will have twice as many rangers meeting visitors this year compared with 2019.
24. The Family of Cairngorms Rangers (13 partner services and CNPA) communicate and share experiences via mobile phone groups.

### **Visitor Infrastructure and Management**

25. Since September 2020 a significant number of key countryside destinations have been improved, many through CNPA funding support, to better manage for visitors.
26. Improvements in **Deeside** include
  - a. Upgrade and expansion of Linn of Dee car park – NTS with CNPA support
  - b. Upgrade and expansion Linn of Quoich car park – NTS with CNPA support
  - c. Loch Muick car park expansion (summer 2021)
  - d. Cambus o May bridge repaired & open – Aberdeenshire Council
  - e. Dinnet new car park west of village (summer 2021) – Dinnet Estate
  - f. New local information centre in Braemar – Community with CNPA support
27. Aberdeenshire Council has also issued traffic orders so that when ‘dangerously busy’ the minor country roads to Loch Muick and Linn of Dee can be temporarily closed but staffed so residents and business retain necessary access.
28. Improvements in **Angus and Glenshee**
  - a. Upgrade to Glenshee local information centre
  - b. Glenshee public toilets to be upgrade (summer 2021)
  - c. Glen Doll variable sign & mobile toilets being investigated
29. Improvements in **Badenoch and Strathspey**
  - a. Loch an Eilean car park upgraded & enlarged – Rothiemurchus Estate with CNPA support
  - b. Loch Garten visitor centre upgraded inc car park improvements– RSPB
  - c. Loch Garten paths upgraded – RSPB with CNPA support
  - d. Aviemore VIC redesigned – Visit Scotland
30. Improvements to **Glenmore and CairnGorm Mt**
  - a. Tarmac path from Visitor Centre and Campsite linking to beach & Glenmore Lodge path constructed – RTIF with CNPA support

- b. Four slow road crossing points installed - RTIF with CNPA support
- c. Beach Car park improved & expanded – FLS with CNPA support
- d. Beach Toilets upgraded - FLS with CNPA support
- e. Speed limit in Glenmore reduced to 30 mph
- f. Highland Council with CNPA support to improve loch side parking (summer 2021)
- g. CairnGorm Mt with CNPA support to install campervan waste disposal at Ciste car park (summer 2021)
- h. Highland Council with CNPA support investigating continuous bus service from Aviemore to Glenmore 10.00 – 16.00 through July and August.

### **Cairngorms Green recovery Fund**

31. In a slightly wider context the Cairngorms Green Recovery Fund has been reinstated in 2021 and is made up of £250,000 from the CNPA and a further £50,000 from the Cairngorms Trust and has four guiding principles:

- a. Green – projects will contribute to strengthening the natural and social capital of the Park.
- b. Cairngorms – projects will be Cairngorms National Park focused and contribute to the outcomes of the National Park Partnership Plan.
- c. Partnership – applicants will work in partnership with others to deliver projects, focused on green recovery, well-being and economic growth.
- d. Employment – Projects will endeavour to maximise their contribution to local employment and impact for the National Park.

32. Groups eligible to apply for the Fund include:

- a. Community Bodies,
- b. Registered Charities,
- c. Business Associations and Nature/Climate Bodies or Partnerships.

### **Conclusion**

33. While a huge amount of work has been undertaken to support safe management for visitors in the Cairngorms all partners expect 2021 to be a busy year with significant challenges. More than ever we all need to support the overriding principle of **#CairngormsTogether**

**Annex I CNP Ranger Service Report Data 2021**

Cairngorms National Park Ranger Service Report Data 2021									
Week beginning	No. Patrols	No. of people engaged with	No. tents encountered	No. of overnighting campervans	No. of dogs on a lead (or under very close control) encountered	No. of dogs off the lead (or not under very close control) encountered	No. of live fires/BBQs extinguished	No. of old fire/BBQ remains cleared	No. of bags of litter collected (units of 0.25)
29th March	47	271	5	30	88	87	3	39	34
5th April	44	238	0	7	99	26	0	12	22.25
12th April	42	229	8	29	108	20	3	30	51.75
19th April	44	323	9	26	116	28	8	26	26.5
26th April	44	295	18	41	85	27	6	17	16.5
3rd May	32	320	11	22	80	17	0	15	44.25
10th May	32	357	50	54	89	18	11	14	10.5
17th May	43	233	32	19	90	7	1	19	14