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## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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### **CONFIDENTIAL - FOR DECISION**

**Title: NATIONAL PARK PARTNERSHIP PLAN 2022 TO 2027 – DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION**

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#### **Purpose**

This paper presents the draft Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) for consultation. The NPPP has been discussed with a range of stakeholders and an informal consultation has also been taken forward on the big themes for the National Park.

#### **Recommendations**

**The Board is asked to:**

- a) Agree to consult on the draft National Park Partnership Plan 2022 – 2027 (Annex 3).**
- b) Agree that the consultation lasts from 23<sup>rd</sup> September to 17<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

## **NATIONAL PARK PARTNERSHIP PLAN – DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION**

### **Overview**

1. The National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) sets out how all those with a responsibility for the Park will co-ordinate their work to tackle the most important issues.
2. Scottish National Parks share four aims set out by Parliament:
  - to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area;
  - to promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area;
  - to promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public;
  - to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.
3. These aims are to be pursued collectively. However, if there is conflict between the first aim and any of the others then greater weight must be given to the first aim (section 9.6 of the National Parks (Scotland) Act). This is a sustainable development approach in which conservation of the natural and cultural heritage underpins the economic, social and recreation value of the National Park.
4. The Partnership Plan embeds this principle in the strategy for the Park that is approved by Ministers and sets the framework for all public bodies delivering relevant functions.

### **National Policy Context**

5. There have been significant changes in the policy context for the NPPP since 2017 when the Plan was last prepared. A climate emergency and nature crisis has been declared, we have left the European Union, the Covid-19 pandemic and our collective need to recover from its impacts is at the forefront of policy development, and there is a desire to move to a well-being economy that works for all citizens.
6. There will also be changes to policy over the coming year that will be taken account of as the plan is developed. This includes the outputs from COP26 & COP15, National Planning Framework 4, Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 and other national policy developments such as the Programme for Government.
7. The Cairngorms National Park also has a significant role to play in delivering the policy ambition of Scottish Government. This is around being a place to innovate, trial and show ambition on delivering solutions to the key challenges of our time.

### **Stakeholder Involvement**

8. The development of the draft NPPP has been taken forward with significant stakeholder involvement. The work has been guided by input from the NPPP

Stakeholders Group that has met on 5 occasions since February 2021. The membership is at Annex 1.

9. The CNPA Board have also had significant discussions on the draft plan on 7 occasions since November 2020. These were on 27<sup>th</sup> Nov 2020, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2021, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2021, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2021, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2021, 12<sup>th</sup> June 2021 & 27<sup>th</sup> August 2021.
10. These discussions have been supplemented with bi-lateral meetings and correspondence with a wide range of organisations. A draft of the plan was also circulated for discussion at meetings of the following groups in August 2021. The membership of these groups is at Annex 1.
  - a) Cairngorms Upland Advisory Group
  - b) Cairngorms Economic Steering Group
  - c) Cairngorms Tourism Partnership
  - d) Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum
  - e) Cairngorms Nature Steering Group
  - f) Cairngorms Equalities Advisory Panel
11. The feedback given by stakeholders has been tremendously helpful in formulating this draft National Park Partnership Plan. The draft plan provides a great opportunity to enable the big discussions about the future direction of the Park.

### **Informal Consultation Feedback**

12. The informal consultation launched on 15 June, including the rollout of a [dedicated microsite](#) using the Commonplace platform. Media and website activity was followed by a large-scale social media push, with paid-for promotional activity starting a month later on 15 July across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. Over 50 posts have gone out so far across our social channels, reaching 220,000 account users. Instagram in particular has been a revelation in terms of user response, particularly amongst younger demographics.
13. We had originally hoped to do more face to face activity, but a combination of school holidays, ongoing reticence of participant's post-lockdown and other surveys taking place in the National Park have seen us delay much of this activity to the formal phase. However, we have recorded interviews with members of the Cairngorms Youth Action Team to share via social, and plan to plug other gaps in key audiences with a series of eight interviews with gamekeepers, foresters, local businesses, local community organisations, ethnic minority groups, care home workers etc. A printed copy of the survey has also been made available for those who need it.
14. In total, we've had 279 detailed responses so far to all 15 questions, plus a further 185 comments gathered through our social media activity, and a smaller number (c. 20) of face to face qualitative interviews. A significant number (40-50%) have chosen to remain anonymous – something we're exploring with the developers of Commonplace – however, of those who have given us more detail, 41% are local residents, 22% visitors to the Park, 7% local businesses, 7% land managers, 4% partners and 4% community groups. These figures should be treated with caution though given the relatively small sample size.

15. Just over half of respondents are male (52%), 43% female and 4% prefer not to say. Around 5% of those who have given us data are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and 5% of respondents identify as having a disability. There has been a fairly good spread of response by different age groups, more details of which can be found in the accompanying annex.
16. We asked participants a total of 15 questions across six major themes: people and nature, economic recovery post-Covid, achieving net zero, local communities, visitors to the Park and a Park for everyone. Just over half of respondents (55%) suggested that people and nature was the most important theme, with around a quarter (23%) agreeing that there is a good balance between people and nature in the Park at present, and 38% disagreeing.
17. In terms of key emerging themes from the qualitative responses received so far, these include: more designated areas and / or facilities to keep visitors away from sensitive sites; large-scale woodland expansion and peatland restoration; protecting the interests and jobs of the rural workforce alongside taking action on climate change / biodiversity loss; more affordable homes for local workers and restrictions on short-term lets; improved public transport options plus expanded cycle and walking routes; upgraded visitors infrastructure; greater power for local communities in the form of citizens' assemblies / greater support for community councils; training and education opportunities connected to new green jobs; and CNPA needing to practice what it preaches on carbon emissions reduction. A full breakdown of responses can be found in Annex 2.

## **Formal Consultation Process**

18. The formal consultation process will start on 23 September and run for 12 weeks to 17 December. The formal consultation will be primarily web-based with meetings of groups online; however, provision will be made for those who do not have access to a computer or struggle to use them). Consultees and organisations will be informed directly in writing as usual and the consultation will be shared by the normal CNPA distribution lists. The wider promotion will build on what we have learnt from the informal consultation, targeting particular groups and sectors through key events and drop-in opportunities, social media and also giving potential respondents the opportunity to respond quickly and easily or in as much depth as they want.
19. There will be meetings of the NP Forums and Groups, bi-lateral meetings with organisations and interaction with Local Authority committees.

## **Questions for Formal Consultation**

20. The following are proposed as the questions for the formal consultation:

### **Nature, People & Place Objectives**

- a) To what extent do you agree or disagree that these are the right objectives for nature/people/place in the National Park?

- b) Is there anything missing from the above list that you think we should prioritise? If so, why?
- c) Are there any specific policies or actions we should take to help deliver these objectives? Click through to either;

#### Nature, People and Place Policies

- a) Have you got any comments on the policies we have proposed? (include reference)
- b) Are there any policies you think should be added?

#### Nature, People and Place Actions

- a) Have you got any comments on the actions we have proposed? (include reference)
- b) Are there any actions you think should be added?

#### Specific questions

- a) Capital investment: Do you think these are the right principles for investment in the National Park and what key infrastructure projects should the National Park focus on over the next 5 years?
- b) RLUP/RLUF: What are the key issues that you want the Regional Land Use Framework to focus on in the Cairngorms National Park?
- c) RLUP/RLUF: What level of detail is needed for a RLUF to be of use to funders, communities and to land managers?
- d) Regional Spatial Strategy: In the context of the National Park Partnership Plan and as the Regional Spatial Strategy, are there other strategic developments that you consider should be identified?

### **Evidence Papers**

- 21. The consultation will be supported by a range of evidence papers that summarise the relevant data trends, policy and changes that have influenced the draft National Park Partnership Plan. The evidence papers have been produced to summarise and condense the most relevant information in infographic forms to make them as accessible and quick to digest as possible.

### **Statutory Assessments**

- 22. The draft NPPP has been prepared with a number of statutory assessments. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) processes identify if there are any significant effects on the environment or on European designated sites. The SEA and HRA processes conclude there are no significant negative environmental effects or effects on the integrity of designated sites.
- 23. The Equalities Impact Assessment identifies potential impacts on equalities groups. The draft NPPP includes specific objectives, policy and actions targeting equalities and specific equalities groups, including young people and minority ethnic groups. However, the strategic nature of the NPPP means that further consideration of the detail of individual projects and programmes will be required to ensure they address the needs of these groups in measurable ways and that equalities issues addressed collectively in all partners activities.

## **Next Steps**

24. As part of our communications activity launching the formal consultation on 23 September, we will highlight the key priorities raised by members of the public so far, and map these onto objectives contained within the draft Partnership Plan. Many of the communications techniques identified ahead of the informal consultation – from drop-in meetings to online influencer activity, partner toolkits and face to face information sessions – will be rolled out over the course of the next few months to ensure we receive a breadth of responses from all our key audience types.
25. We are also working with an independent market research agency – Scotinform – who have extensive experience of public consultations and have been advising on how we reach audiences that are hardest to engage with this type of activity. Our plan is to use the data from Commonplace and other engagement tools to highlight those audiences that are least engaged, and target these groups accordingly with more tailored activity. We are doing something similar to this within the informal consultation, where eight in-depth interviews will help shed light on key issues for these groups and hopefully open doors to contributors' networks (eg other farmers and land managers, young people in the Park) for the formal consultation.
26. We want to get members involved in the formal consultation to hear people's views and we will be pulling together a programme of the groups, forums and events that members can attend over the course of the Autumn.
27. In January a consultation report will be produced that sets out all the key feedback to consultation. This feedback will be used to look at potential changes to the Plan with the Board in February and March 2022. The finalised Plan will go to the Board in April 2022 and Scottish Ministers in June 2022 for final sign-off.

**Grant Moir, Gavin Miles, Oliver Davies**

**1<sup>st</sup> September 2021**

**[grantmoir@cairngorms.co.uk](mailto:grantmoir@cairngorms.co.uk)**

**Annex I – Stakeholder Groups (non CNPA members)**

**NPPP Stakeholders Group**

Mark Tate	Cairngorms Business Partnership
Chris Donald	Nature Scot
John Risby	Scottish Forestry
Graeme Prest	Forestry and Land Scotland
James Gibbs	Highland and Islands Enterprise
Hamish Trench	Scottish Land Commission
Alison Carrington	Skills Development Scotland
John Lauder	Sustrans
Janelle Clark	Aberdeenshire Council
Liz Cowie / Kate Lackie	Highland Council
Sarah Jane Laing	Scottish Land and Estates
Debora Long	Scottish Environment LINK
Karen Derrick	Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey

**Cairngorms Upland Advisory Group**

John Grierson	AoCC
Alison Hester	James Hutton Institute
John Risby	Scottish Forestry
Chris Donald	Scottish Natural Heritage
Richard Cooke	Association of Deer Management Groups
Colin Shedden	British Association for Shooting and Conservation
Adam Smith	Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust
Alex Jenkins	Gamekeeping
Anne Rae MacDonald	Farming
Claire Smith	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
David Frew	National Trust for Scotland
Thomas MacDonell	Cairngorms Connect
Andrew Heald	Forestry
Richard Gledson	Landownership
Katy Dickson	Scottish Land & Estates
Sandy Davidson	University of the Highlands & Islands student
David Windle	North East Mountain Trust

**Cairngorms Economic Steering Group**

Allison Carrington	Skills Development Scotland
Amanda Frazer	Newtonmore Business Association
Andy McCann	The Highland Council
Mathew Lockley	Aberdeenshire Council
David Richardson	Federation of Small Businesses
Duncan Macaskill	Ballater Business Association
Fiona Van Aardt	Scottish Land and Estates
Gail Cleaver	Scottish Council for Development and Industry (SCDI)
Graham Prentice	Kingussie Business Association
James Gibbs	Highlands and Islands Enterprise

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Jamie Bell	Scottish Enterprise
Karen Martin	Growbiz/ Grantown Business Association
Kirsty Bruce	Aviemore and Glenmore Community Trust
Mark Tate	Cairngorms Business Partnership
Michelle Hardie	The Highland Council
Paul Macari	Aberdeenshire Council
Rhona Metcalfe	Blair Atholl Business Association
Sarah Hubbard	Braemar Business Association

**Cairngorms Tourism Partnership**

Matthew Lockley	Aberdeenshire Council
Rhona Fraser	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Colin Simpson	Highland Council
Chris Taylor	VisitScotland
Mark Tate	Cairngorms Business Partnership
Laurie Piper	Visit Moray Speyside
Chris Foy	VisitAberdeenshire
Karen Derrick	Community Representative (VABS)
Ross Coulter	Landmark Forest Adventure Park
Jess Tomes	RSPB

**Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum**

John Grierson	Chair
Trevor Thornley	Community
Anne-Marie Nuttall	Recreation
Eilidh Scobbie	Recreation
Ailsa Niven	Public Health
Peter Wright	Community
Sally Devlin	Recreation
Neil Wilson	Recreation

**Cairngorms Nature Steering Group**

Jeremy Roberts	Cairngorms Connect
Andy Wells	Crown Estates
Richard Cooke	Dalhousie Estates
Joan Cumming	Forest and Land Scotland
Iain Wilson	National Farmers Union Scotland
Shaila Rao	National Trust for Scotland
Anne Elliot	NatureScot
Kate Redpath	Marr Area Partnership
Claire Smith	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Marie Donald	Scottish Environmental Protection Agency
Karen Ramoo	Scottish Land and Estates
Thomas Macdonell	Wild land Limited



**Cairngorms Equalities Advisory Panel**

Heather Earnshaw  
Patrycja Kupiek  
Gemma Hendry  
Kevin Hutchens  
Linda Bamford  
Pammy Johal  
Willow May  
Vanessa Altweck  
Stuart Hall  
Bo Hickey

## **Annex 2 – Informal Consultation Feedback**

### **Summary of our overall approach plus respondent demographics**

- The informal consultation launched on 15 June, including the rollout of a dedicated microsite using the Commonplace platform. Media and website activity was followed by a large-scale social media push, with paid-for promotional activity starting a month later on 15 July across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.
- We have posted 54 unique posts across our social channels, reaching 220,000 account users; they engaged 24,443 times with content, shared our posts 165 times, left 185 comments and clicked through to the consultation platform 583 times. Instagram in particular has been a revelation in terms of user response, particularly amongst younger demographics.
- We had originally hoped to do more face to face activity, but a combination of school holidays, ongoing reticence of participant's post-lockdown and other surveys taking place in the Park have seen us delay much of this activity to the formal phase. However, we have recorded interviews with members of the Cairngorms Youth Action Team to share via social, and plan to plug other gaps in key audiences with a series of eight interviews with gamekeepers, foresters, local businesses, local community organisations, ethnic minority groups, care home workers etc. A printed copy of the survey has also been made available.
- We disseminated a toolkit of campaign materials to a wide variety of partners in late June covering all our target audiences, and have held Park Plan-specific sessions with Cairngorms Economic Steering Group, Cairngorms Upland Advisory Group, East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership, Local Access Forum, Cairngorms Nature Steering Group, Equalities Forum etc.
- We plan to launch a new mapping based response mechanism early next week via the Commonplace platform to give people a quick way of leaving comments on specific areas of the Park.
- In total, we've had 279 contributions so far, plus a further 185 comments gathered through our social media activity, and a smaller number (c. 20) of face to face qualitative interviews.
- A significant number of contributors (40-50%) have chosen to remain anonymous so far – something we're exploring with the developers of Commonplace – however, of those who have given us more detail, 41% are local residents, 22% visitors to the Park, 7% local businesses, 7% land managers, 4% partners and 4% community groups. These figures should be treated with caution though.
- 52% of respondents are male, 43% female and 4% prefer not to say. Around 5% of those who have given us data are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and 5% of respondents identify as having a disability.
- 12% of Commonplace respondents were aged 25-34, 15% 35-44, 8% 45-54, 38% 55-64, and 27% over 65. These figures do not include our qualitative interviews with CYAT members or any social media responses, particularly those from Instagram (which skews younger).

### **Key emerging themes by subject area**

- We asked participants a total of 15 questions across six major themes: people and nature, economic recovery post-Covid, achieving net zero, local communities, visitors to the Park and a Park for everyone.
- Of these, people and nature was deemed the most important theme by 55% of respondents, net zero 13%, local community 12% and a park for everyone 6%.
- On people and nature:
  - 23% agreed or strongly agreed that there is a good balance of people and nature in the Park at present. 38% disagreed, 39% neither agreed nor disagreed.
  - When asked 'how should land be managed to benefit both people and nature', the most common responses were...
    - More designated areas / facilities to keep tourists away from sensitive areas (including potential 'no go' areas).
    - Greater management controls on grouse moors and deer estates.
    - Large-scale woodland expansion and peatland restoration.
    - Protecting the interests and jobs of farmers, crofters, gamekeepers etc. as well as looking after nature.
    - Rewild / renaturalise areas of CNP, including reintroducing 'missing' species
    - Legal action / greater penalties for those who break the law eg on raptor persecution.
- On economic recovery:
  - 56% agreed or strongly agreed that the economy in CNP will recover quickly post-Covid-19. 15% disagreed, 29% neither agreed nor disagreed.
  - When asked 'what should our priorities be to help businesses and communities recover', the most common responses were...
    - A green recovery, supporting businesses and communities to embed sustainability into their practices (incl. emphasis on ecotourism).
    - More affordable homes to support the local workforce.
    - Diversifying the economy away from a reliance on tourism, with potential for training, advice and guidance. Suggestion of a rural skills college from a couple of contributors.
    - Restrictions on short-term lets and second homes, again to support the local workforce.
    - Improve visitor facilities to accommodate increased numbers of 'staycationers' e.g. campsites, toilets, car parks etc.
    - Develop green jobs associated with renaturalising / rewilding initiatives.
    - Tackling the shortage of qualified staff due to Covid, Brexit etc. Fair employment came up in this discussion too.
- On achieving net zero:
  - 92% of respondents said it was either important or very important that individuals, communities, businesses and others took action to tackle climate change. Just 4% said it was unimportant.
  - When asked 'what steps to individuals, communities, businesses etc. need to take to reach net zero', the most common responses were...

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- Better, greener public transport options plus widespread promotion of car sharing and/or travelling less.
- Promoting electrical vehicle usage and development EV infrastructure across the Park (some even argued for a fossil fuel ban across CNP).
- Expanding our network of safe cycle paths, footpaths and associated infrastructure, including e-bikes.
- Expanding woodland and using more land for carbon capture / storage across the Park, especially through peatland restoration.
- Retrofitting existing buildings e.g. with better insulation, greener energy options etc., plus taking a stricter approach to new development.
- Banning or restricting muirburn.
- On local communities:
  - 89% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that local communities have an important part to play in shaping the future of CNP.
  - When asked 'what support do people need to have a greater say in their local area', the most common responses were...
    - More engagement in the form of events, workshops and surveys. This included a big emphasis on door to door activity.
    - A need for genuine two-way dialogue; to see their opinions actually shaping activity on the ground.
    - Training and education opportunities so communities know what to do and how they can get involved.
    - Creating platforms (both on and offline) for people to have their say easily and report any issues.
    - More information about who owns land in their area and how it's managed.
    - Greater power and support for Community Councils, and the creation of Citizens' Assemblies / exploring participative budgeting.
- On visitors to the Park:
  - 41% said the current level of 2m visitors per annum was too many, 33% said it was about right, 6% said it was too few, and 22% weren't sure.
  - When asked 'how can we welcome visitors while protecting local communities, landscapes and wildlife', the most common responses were...
    - Better education of visitors both before they travel and when they arrive on how to behave in the countryside, including signage, interpretation, education resources etc.
    - Improved visitor infrastructure – campsites, bins, recycling facilities etc.
    - Restricting visitor access to sensitive areas, coupled with clearer waymarked routes to encourage people to explore less sensitive areas.
    - The potential for a small surcharge to visitors, with proceeds invested in local communities.
    - Better public transport options and cycle / walking routes, plus incentives for people to use them.
    - More seasonal rangers plus ranger bases across the Park.
    - Greater enforcement measures e.g. spot fines for littering, dog waste etc.

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- On a Park for everyone:
  - 77% felt that CNP was accessible to people like them, 9% disagreed, 14% neither agreed nor disagreed. Many respondents pointed out that – whilst the Park was accessible to them – the same may not be true for other audiences.
  - When asked ‘what practical measures would help you and others explore and enjoy the Park more easily’, the most common responses were...
    - Improved public transport and cycling / walking routes, including options for a hop on hop off bus service, park and ride scheme, plus all-abilities path network etc.
    - It’s easy enough as it is.
    - Improve visitor infrastructure around the Park e.g. disabled parking, toilets, campsites, benches etc.
    - Education, guidance and support for those new to the countryside.
    - More waymarked paths / mountain bike trails to protect sensitive areas.
    - More rangers and trained guides, including guided walk opportunities.
    - Clearer information available through CNP communication channels, including website, leaflets, social media etc.
- And finally, we asked how optimistic or pessimistic people were feeling about the future of CNP. 48% were either optimistic or very optimistic, 25% neither optimistic nor pessimistic, 18% pessimistic and 9% very pessimistic.