

NOTE OF THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK STRATEGY GROUP MEETING

3RD JULY 2009, BOAT OF GARTEN

Attendees:

Alan Rankin (Cairngorms Business Partnership)	Les Allen (Aberdeenshire Council)
Alastair MacLennan (NFUS, SRPBA)	Martin Price (UHI)
Allan Wright (Moray Council)	Mike Gibson (Macaulay Land Use Research Institute)
Andrew Barbour (Deer Commission for Scotland)	Murray Ferguson (CNPA)
Andrew Thin (Scottish Natural Heritage)	Peter Ord (Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust)
Anne Robertson (Aberdeenshire Council)	Peter Russell (Scottish Government)
David Green (CNPA)	Roger Clegg (Association of Cairngorms Communities)
David Hughes Hallett (LLTNPA)	Roland Bean (Perth & Kinross Council)
David Innes (Aberdeenshire Council)	Sandy Park (Highland Council)
Drennan Watson (Environment LINK)	Scott Armstrong (Visit Scotland)
Eric Lawson (Angus Council)	Stuart Black (Highland Council)
Gavin Miles (CNPA)	Susan Davies (Scottish Natural Heritage)
Hamish Trench (CNPA)	William Gilfillan (Highland Council)
Ian Miller (Perth & Kinross Council)	
Kate Howie (Perth & Kinross Council)	

David Green welcomed and introduced the meeting with an update on the National Park and National Park Authority following the strategic review carried out by Scottish Government.

Session I Presentations:

Hamish Trench - Overview of progress in the National Park Plan priorities for action and towards the outcomes.

Les Allan - Aberdeenshire Council's involvement in "Our Community Way Forward", community needs assessment in Ballater.

William Gilfillan - Highland Council's use of community needs assessments in Badenoch & Strathspey and other parts of Highland Council area.

Peter Ord & Dougie Baird - Overview, history and examples of the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust's (COAT) work

Discussion:

Discussion focused on the following main points:

- Clear links of outdoor access to health and well-being of communities were noted and the potential for greater collaboration with NHS Scotland to deliver the Scottish Government health outcomes.
- The support of those enjoying the outdoors for car parking charges is related to clarity on the use to which the money is put.
- The Community Planning Partnership in Badenoch & Strathspey has a relatively small steering group to avoid unnecessary involvement from many organisations. However, at the project level, many more organisations can be involved, including estates/landowners but focused relevant and practical issues and projects.
- Clear awareness that funding and resources will decrease in the short-term of this Park Plan delivery so a realistic assessment of what outcomes can be achieved is important.
- As funding becomes increasingly scarce and Trust mechanisms provide a good way of delivering public benefits and services while accessing a more extensive and diverse range of funds than single organisations such as local authorities are able to.

Session 2 Presentations:

Alan Rankin - Overview of development of the Cairngorms Business Partnership.

David Innes - Aberdeenshire Council's linking of the Cairngorms National Park into the Curriculum for Excellence.

Discussion:

Discussion focused on the following main points:

- Perth and Kinross Council attendees welcomed the informative presentations and noted similarities and synergies with current work in Perth and Kinross. Looking ahead to extension of the boundary, early and greater involvement of the Council in specific areas of work in the Park would be welcome.
- The proposed boundary extension would also bring fresh opportunities to share good practice and experience among partners in both directions.

- Agreement of the need to focus on a small number of priorities to see significant achievements – this may mean smaller than the current priorities in the National Park Plan.
- Concern was expressed by Link that there is not sufficient recreational strategy for the Park in order to manage impacts and that there is provision for too much housing.
- Discussion on the focus of the Cairngorms Business Partnership – would it focus on tourism to the exclusion of other enterprises? The Partnership is seen as a further development of the Chamber of Commerce therefore although tourism will be a particular focus it will also address other issues. Part of the aim of the business partnership is to provide a single and stronger business voice in the National Park to engage with other organizations, where it is appropriate to take a Park-wide approach that builds on local initiatives.
- Good progress in delivery was noted, but a question raised over how to assess effectively against indicators, to provide a more robust assessment of progress. This work is ongoing in both National Parks, and set in the context of the Scottish Government performance framework.
- Support for the principle of an informal review of delivery of the National Park Plan, particularly as the context has changed significantly. Issues such as financial recession and climate change agenda provide new challenges and opportunities.
- There is a good opportunity for greater sharing of research and good practice, both within and between the research community and practitioners/policy makers. UHI offered to take a lead in bringing together the research community to focus on research needs in the Park.

Discussion Groups

Overall observations

- The National Park should be an exemplar of how to test new approaches and to do things well
- The National Park provides an opportunity for organisations to lever in greater resources and give a higher profile to their work
- The National Park is an ideal place to use our joint expertise more visibly

What outcomes/opportunities in particular should we remain focused on delivering for 2012?

Climate change –

- Opportunity for Park to be a demonstration at a regional scale showing how to respond well to climate change – both mitigation and adaptation, particularly in rural land use and tourism sectors.
- Renewable energy is a key sector which requires good advice, policy and support in order to realise the potential within the Park.

Land management support –

- effective and targeted land management support is a key mechanism to deliver a wide range of other NPP outcomes, so effort to improve the integration and targeting should continue.
- Support should seek to make SRDP work effectively to contribute to the NPP priorities, but also look beyond SRDP at other support options such as ERDF.
- Building the capacity of land management advisory services is key

Biodiversity –

- Bringing features on designated sites into favourable condition must remain a high priority, in relation to the 2010 target and beyond.
- There is an opportunity to identify innovative ways to help deliver those targets in the Park, eg through use of volunteer action on invasive no-native species.
- Enhancing the habitat condition outside designated sites, as part of an integrated network of habitats, should remain a priority in the Park.

Branding and Marketing –

- Making more of the National Park brand as a commercial marketing opportunity, both for local businesses and national businesses that operate in the area.
- Marketing the Park in a way that respects the distinctiveness of its individual component parts and contributes to a sense of caring for the place.

Housing –

- Given financial and market constraints beyond partners' control, focus on improving quality and sustainability of housing as a differential in the Park.

Education and skills –

- Real opportunity building on the Curriculum for Excellence to develop outdoor learning and rural training and skills opportunities.

Enjoyment

- Increasing opportunities for people to enjoy the Park without damaging it, particularly on the lower ground and closer to communities.

Knowledge sharing

- We must try and make more of our collective data, information and knowledge of the Cairngorms through synthesis and sharing.

Changes in context

Climate Change Bill – the targets set in the Bill passed by Parliament are a significant change in context. The National Park should be a 'pathfinder' and exemplar for how action can be taken to contribute to these targets

Looking to the longer term

- In terms of land use policy, the next NPP should take a more explicit focus on the integration of land use.
- More connectivity with areas beyond the Park to make the most of the Park as a regional asset.
- National companies that have a connection with the Park should be encouraged to support the Park more conspicuously whether through their work directly, promotion or funding.

Summary and Follow-up

- The points highlighted in the group's discussions will directly inform the mid-term review of the National Park Plan delivery.

- CNPA will take forward detailed discussions with partners through the delivery teams and individually where appropriate to focus the priorities and take account of the changing context, to provide a realistic assessment of what can be achieved and where the key opportunities remain, based on the steer provided by the Strategy Group.
- The CNPA Board will consider the mid-term review on 30th October, taking into account the views of the Strategy Group and more detailed discussions with partners.