

CNPA Consultation on Economic Action Plan 2019-2022 - HIE Response

Q1 Review of changes in strategic context (see pp9-11)

Are there other significant economic trends, challenges, opportunities or data sources that we should be taking into account in developing this Action Plan?

Highlands and Islands Enterprise, alongside a wide range of stakeholders from the public and private sectors, is developing a framework to ensure that there is a cohesive approach to strategic planning and delivery of economic and community development of Cairngorm and the surrounding Badenoch and Strathspey area.

The framework aims to build on the existing and significant public sector, business and community engagement and partnership activity which has already identified priority themes and actions. It also seeks to ensure that there is sufficient focus on addressing the current challenges and opportunities at Cairngorm Mountain specifically relating to the non-operation of the funicular railway and the forward investment opportunities which have potential to transform the resort.

This framework is premised on operations at Cairngorm Mountain being a key economic driver for the wider area and the necessity to build a sustainable, year-round business on the mountain, attracting and retaining visitors and bringing economic benefit to the wider area.

We will work with partners to implement the framework; a key next step will be a facilitated workshop to agree approach and priorities.

Maximising the potential of this asset requires a new vision and masterplan which will require significant investment and time to deliver and requires to sit alongside priority themes and projects for the wider area.

Refinement of this framework will require widespread consultation and engagement. We shall ensure that its contents complement the CNPA Economic Action Plan and work with it.

We recommend that the Plan gives more recognition to the growing importance of technology and advanced engineering. This may also have potential to addressing issues in the labour market through automation, provide skilled, well-paid opportunities for young people and make a contribution to higher average wages in the Park area.

There are excellent examples outside the Park area of community-led development for the provision of commercial and residential infrastructure. We suggest some recognition of the possible opportunity from this and the implementation by local communities and social enterprises e.g. the Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust.

The growing trend for timber-built housing in Scotland presents opportunity for added value in the forestry and timber sector and there are already some exemplar businesses in this area e.g. Russwood.

The Plan might give more emphasis to the opportunities presented by the dualling of the A9 in Section 4.

Also, on Page 9, re Regional economic partnerships, the Moray Growth Deal overlaps CNPA area and this should lead to an improvement in rural transport through the bus service initiative.

We acknowledge the importance of tourism but also would emphasise the importance of diversifying the economy into new industries, often paying higher salaries and wages. HIE would be

pleased to lead on an assessment of business infrastructure requirements for the next 10 years in partnership with the CNPA in the areas of the Park which it covers. We assume the CNPA will make a similar approach to Scottish Enterprise for the areas of the Park in Aberdeenshire, Angus and Perth & Kinross.

Q2 Priority themes and actions (see pp12-17) Do you support these Actions to deliver the economic strategy as set out in the National Park Partnership Plan? Please explain why?

We suggest an additional Theme on Page 12 of Technology, Data and Innovation. We would be happy to work with the National Park to identify appropriate actions together.

Re page 14, Theme 2, we support the development of distilleries in the area, particularly in respect of Visitors' Centres, to promote employment (we note the reference on page 8 under Employment by Sector with only 1% attributed to the "Whisky and Drink" sector).

On the list of priority Themes and the Leads (pages 13-17) we would suggest that there are other participants;

Actions	Lead/Joint Lead
Wages	CNPA, HIE, SDS (and possibly CBP and FSB?)
Tourism	CNPA, Visit Scotland, CBP (as the DMO)
Cairngorm Mountain	Also SNH, wider community (rather than Community Trust)
Economic and social data	HIE, SE
Under Priority Theme 3 "Education, training and skills development, we suggest that "Local Provision of Further and Higher Education" be added as an action	UHI
Housing delivery	Local Authorities?
Re Theme 4 we note the dearth of investment south of Aviemore and ask the Park to consider whether the A9 dualling might bring an opportunity for additional road services facilities in the area.	
Re Theme 5 HIE to be included amongst Leads for "Investment in community-led development" and "Developing an entrepreneurial culture"	

Q3 Delivery and monitoring (see p18) Are these delivery and monitoring arrangements appropriate for the Economic Action Plan? Please explain why?

Reference should be to "Highlands and Islands Enterprise" instead of "Highland and Islands Enterprise".

We fully support the approach outlined here.

The Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy has asked for a wider strategic plan outlining steps integrating the plans for Cairngorm Mountain with the wider economy of Badenoch and Strathspey. We anticipate that this plan will support the aims Park's Economic Action Plan 2019-2022.