

## **Cairngorm Mountain – Towards a Vision and Masterplan**

The Cairngorms National Park Authority have the following comments on the 'Cairngorm Mountain – Towards a Vision and Masterplan' consultation document.

### **Strategic Context**

There are three CNPA related documents that are very relevant to this masterplan – the [National Park Partnership Plan](#), [The Cairngorm & Glenmore Strategy](#) and the [Cairngorm Mountain Working Principles](#).

The other key document is the [snow report for Cairngorm Mountain](#) that sets out the potential impact of climate change scenarios on snow in the Cairngorms and specifically Cairngorm Mountain.

### **Key Underpinning**

The vision and masterplan is predicated on a repaired funicular. The CNPA has recently granted planning permission for the repair of the funicular but at this time no final decision has been taken on the business case. The CNPA's comments are thus predicated on the funicular being repaired. If it is not repaired the CNPA would consider the issue again and provide an updated set of advice on the long-term vision for Cairngorm Mountain.

The CNPA would like to see the full business case for the funicular repair to enable us to better understand the financial considerations around the repair or replace options.

### **Section 2 - Vision Statement & Guiding Principles**

The overall vision and guiding principles seem sensible especially looking at optimisation rather than maximisation. Overall the CNPA are supportive but think the vision should be for all partners.

In the Guiding Principles the CNPA think that Special Qualities of the National Park need to be added to point 6 and that a reference should be made to the fact that Cairngorm Mountain is in the core mountain area at the heart of the National Park. There is also a need to refer in the guiding principles to access for all to the mountain in all seasons for recreation and enjoyment.

### **Section 3 - Key Strategies**

The key strategies set out ten significant work areas and many of them require further feasibility work. The comments are thus at a high level from the CNPA and as these strategies are developed the CNPA will provide further input and comments.

- 1) All Year Round Operating Model – Key issue is to get a sustainable model for the mountain that takes into account declining ski days, the impact of climate change, the opportunity to enhance the summer experience and an offering for visitors that complements and supports the surrounding area of Glenmore, the wider Strath & the National Park.
- 2) Scottish Centre for the Mountain Environment – It is a good concept but consideration needs to be given to how this would be delivered, what exactly the centre is for, does it have an educational role, how it would work with similar

centres (Centre for Mountain Studies, UHI) and would it raise revenue for Cairngorm Mountain or need public subsidy. This Centre would also need to link with any work in Glenmore, so that the stories in the different visitor centres complement each other and needs to be more than just a history of snowsports.

- 3) Mountain for all – Agree that all uplift should be reviewed and optimised. Would be good if the Base Station and the area around it was able to be used by multiple firms (micro-businesses, social enterprises, co-operatives) not just CMSL. Could you have wildlife operators, bike operators, climbing operators etc all operating out of the base station? The same goes for food outlets offering different customer experiences.
- 4) Enhanced User experience – This is a key area. The arrival at the Cas car park is underwhelming and significant work could be done with other companies to enhance the base station area. An initial piece of work would be to get a consistent approach to car management and car park charging across the whole area as a short-term solution e.g. £5 to park in any of the car parks in Glenmore/Cairngorm per day. Consideration should also be given to campervan provision on site. See 9 for longer term approach.
- 5) Access from Ptarmigan – The section 50 agreement has been amended before and the CNPA are happy to discuss further amendments, such as, inclusion of guided walk to top of Cairngorm as part of funicular ticket price. The CNPA is not in favour of unrestricted access from the top station for a variety of safety and environmental reasons.
- 6) Cohesive Approach to Habitat and Ecology – There is a great opportunity to link in the Cairngorm Estate with the wider landscape-scale regeneration in the area. This will build on previous work and needs to consider impacts from herbivore grazing in key areas.
- 7) De-carbonise the mountain. The CNPA is fully behind this approach but any solution must be in keeping with the environment and being in the core cairngorms mountain area.
- 8) Mountain biking – The CNPA is in favour of developing appropriate mountain biking at Cairngorm and Glenmore. However, the land surrounding the Cas bowl is natura designated and will need significant work to look at what could be done in those areas and how overspill from the Cas bowl would be prevented to ensure no detrimental impact on natura features. The cost of maintenance of mountain bike facilities also needs careful consideration as does the management of electric bikes with easier uphill travel reducing the need for paid uplift.
- 9) Promote active travel and sustainable transport – This is a key issue. At present summer and winter cars drive 10 miles up a dead end road to large car parks. This is unsustainable and there is unlikely to be the electrical capacity to provide 1000 cars (Cas & Ciste) with charging capacity in the future.

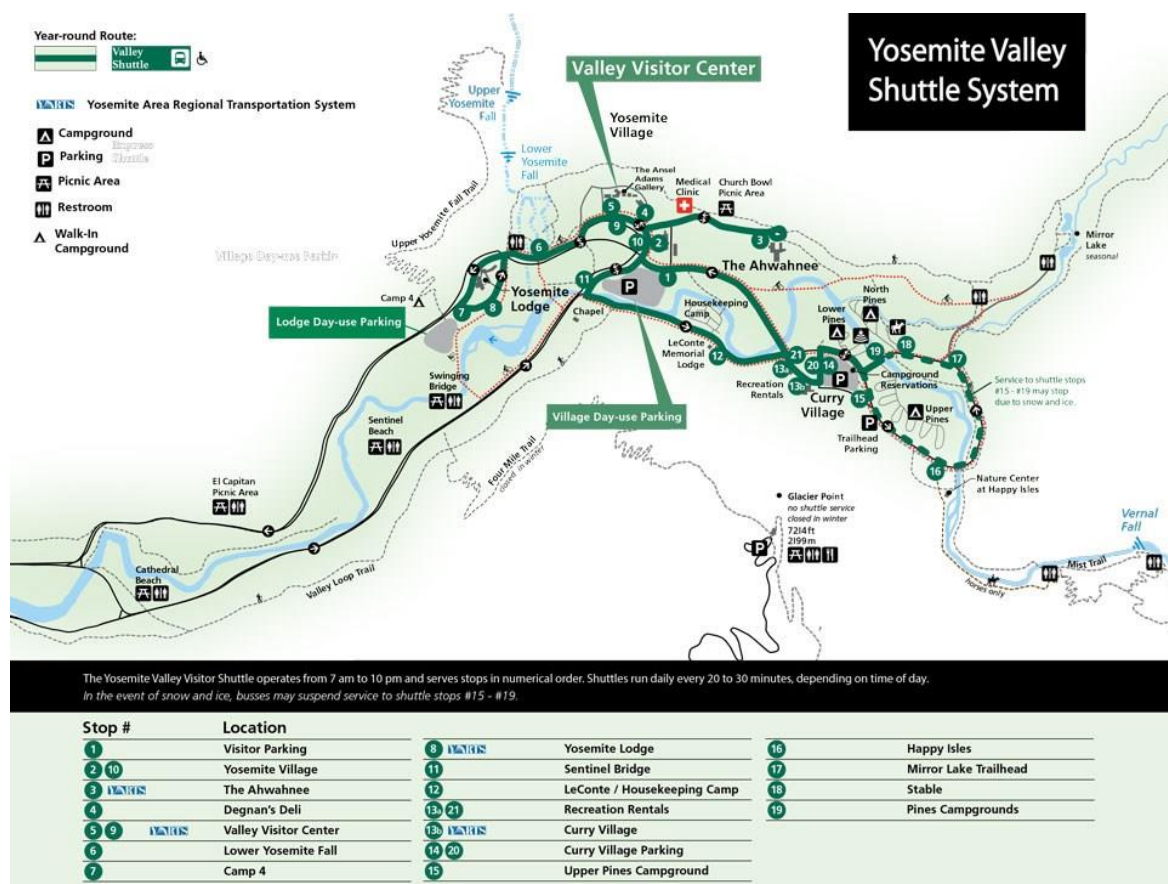
Proper consideration should be given to an electric car park hub in Aviemore area with hydrogen/electric buses shuttling people up to Cairngorm and Glenmore. This would be done in conjunction with closing the road (after B970 turning) to all cars except residents, specific local business customers (e.g. Watersports Centre) and overnight visitors (e.g. Glenmore Lodge, Youth Hostel, Badaguish, Campsite). It

would also allow the removal of the Ciste car park and the reduction of the Cas car park on Cairngorm and create an active travel corridor. This type of approach has been done in many places around the world (Yosemite, Zermat, Dolomites) and would provide a far superior visitor experience.

This approach would also help many of the traffic management issues in Glenmore, would help meet net-zero targets and would help connect Aviemore, Glenmore and Cairngorm in a sustainable way.

This would be a vision fitting the Cairngorms National Park and whilst significant further work will be needed on the detail and finance we believe having a sustainable vision for transport in the future will be crucial for this area.

## Yosemite



10) Monitoring Implementation – A framework that uses the latest technology (IoT) would be ideal and one that allows real time changes to the management of the area both in winter and in summer.

## Section 4 - Masterplan Zones

This section is still at a very high level and will need to be fleshed out to make it more useful from a planning point of view. Overall the conceptual approach does seem to have the right

zones in the right place. The CNPA would like to offer assistance in ensuring the final zoning map is useful for land use planning decisions.

### **Section 5 – Potential or suggested activities to be assessed**

There appears to be too many different activities being suggested in this section and they need to be prioritised around whether they fit with the overall vision for the mountain now and in the future.

The CNPA may be involved in planning applications for some of the proposals in this section and so rather than comment on any particular activity we offer the following guidance:

- 1) Is the activity appropriate for the mountain environment in the core mountain area of the Cairngorms National Park?
- 2) Are the activities available elsewhere in the Strath or wider National Park?
- 3) Would the approach cause displacement from current provision in the Strath or the wider National Park?
- 4) Would the activity have less impact and make more sense elsewhere in the Strath or the wider National Park?

### **CNPA Vision for Cairngorm Mountain**

The CNPA wants to see a successful Cairngorm Mountain. The following sets out the CNPA vision.

- 1) **Cairngorm Mountain is a special place in the National Park and any approach should; be in keeping with the natural environment of the core mountain area, encourage appropriate recreation and take account of climate change;**
- 2) **A fit for purpose uplift for winter and summer that takes account of the need to adapt to climate change;**
- 3) **A transformational change to a public transport led approach to the Cairngorm/Glenmore corridor that befits the flagship visitor area at the heart the National Park.;**
- 4) **Focus development on the base station and open it up to multiple companies to run businesses from including climbing, walking, wildlife, ski touring, mountain biking and multiple catering opportunities.**
- 5) **HIE & FLS land to be managed as one area of public land rather than two separate entities.**
- 6) **A governance model for Cairngorm Mountain that involves community, business and public interest and has clear lines of accountability.**

### **Overall Conclusion**

- 1) The masterplan work is moving in the right direction but needs further work to compliment the work of other partners in delivering the Cairngorm & Glenmore Strategy
- 2) The plan needs further rationalisation and prioritisation and a timescale adopted for potential delivery.
- 3) There are a significant amount of feasibility studies proposed. How long will these take and should these be prioritised?

- 4) Post-snow strategy – There needs to be more in this document about how the mountain might operate and look when snow becomes more irregular.
- 5) The masterplan is very light on what visitors to the National Park actually want from Cairngorm Mountain. More survey data from visitors about what they want would be very beneficial.
- 6) The finalised masterplan would benefit from more financial information and a clearer understanding about how any potential public investment will help to deliver public benefits and best value.

The CNPA looks forward to working on developing the final masterplan with partners and is happy to discuss any of the points in this response.

CNPA - 26 August 2020