



Cairngorms
National Park

Pàirc Nàiseanta a'
Mhonaidh Ruaidh

EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL FOR ESTABLISHING A CULTURAL HERITAGE NETWORK FOR THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK PREPARATORY WORK APPENDICES



Scottish Community Tourism Network CIC

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APPENDICES

1 : ONLINE SURVEY TEMPLATE

See separate PDF document.

2 : USEFUL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ESTABLISHING A FULLY RESOURCED CULTURAL HERITAGE NETWORK FOR THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK

There are several important considerations to be worked through if the decision is taken to establish a new cultural heritage network, which are itemised below. There is considerable overlap and implications from one to another but these have been set out individually to hopefully convey why each needs to be considered.

Purpose

Significant feedback provided via the survey and subsequent meetings was that there was a preconceived assumption that a network would be for asset managers and activity providers – those engaged in cultural heritage activity, rather than those living and working within the Park keen to hold on to their local way of life – to preserve it and record it. There can be tensions between these.

This tension begs a question that does need answered on what the purpose of any network would be. Is it a mechanism to help conserve local cultural heritage in its many forms, or is it to support cultural heritage practitioners do what they are doing better?

Clearly it could fulfil both but this would need to be explicit and activity structured accordingly.

Scale

A question within the survey and which was teased out within the conversations and interviews, was the scale of networking that would be welcomed. There was

clear interest in a Parkwide annual conference type of event but a resource would be needed to make this happen. This would cover venue costs, catering, speaker fees etc but also given the level of volunteers involved in this sector and the scale of the Park, potentially bursary support for attendance.

There was notable interest in more local networking reflecting the respondents own scale of operation – and also reflecting the difference in the cultural heritage of different areas of the Park.

A possible model could therefore be to have a Park wide annual face to face gathering in say February and in autumn more local face to face networking events – and both of which supported by online gathering events in between. A suggested basis for the more local ‘sub’ networks could be:

- *Badenoch & Strathspey*
- *Tomintoul & Glenlivet*
- *Royal Deeside and Don Valley*
- *Highland Perthshire and the Angus Glens*

There could be link ups with the strategic projects and their parent organisations funded to support these sub networks (Badenoch Heritage SCIO, CATERAN EcoMuseum social enterprise and Tomintoul & Glenlivet Development Trust). This would revitalise their purpose.

Governance and Finance

This also ties in with structures. If a new legal entity is created it will require its own governance. Arguably this is an extra burden if the main benefit being sought is greater collaborations and sharing of ideas, knowledge and promotion. If a separate entity was to be considered there are various models to consider from membership cooperative, cooperatives CIC (community interest company) and limited company to Charitable Trust and SCIO (Scottish Incorporated Charitable Organisation. Each of these is governed by either Companies House or OCSR and has annual reporting and auditing requirements.

SCOTO itself was initially set up as a cooperative and then with the benefit of hindsight transitioned to become a cooperative CIC. Our experience suggests that this type of collaborative cultural heritage network does not need an onerous governance structure, especially in the early days and recommends a

simple constitution is adopted that clearly sets out the purpose and modus operandi, roles and responsibilities would be sufficient. As set out elsewhere this network could operate through a parent organisation with their banking financial systems, procedures and reporting.

Structures

Cairngorms currently has a number of networks – some long established and some more recent. Some of these are completely independent of the Park Authority and others have been established by the Park Authority and/or are actively supported by the Park Authority. The Cairngorms Trust, Cairngorms Business Partnership and what was the Association of Cairngorms Communities being key examples.

An important consideration for any cultural heritage network is whether it would see itself as an independent organisation/structure with a voice and a lobbying remit or more of a network to enable collaboration (in support of the National Park's aims for example).

Of note, an independent organisation would require its own structure and governance – and funding. The feedback from the engagement activity suggests an enabling structure is more appropriate and also more deliverable. Few were interested in joining a steering group (or needed to know what was involved first) and very few were willing/able to pay a level of fee which would support an independent organisation. The key benefits people were seeking were networking and collaborative activities – joint funding bids and projects, shared knowledge and training etc.

There is evidence across Scotland of cultural and/or creative networks and forums being established - typically at a council level and with council resources for administration and development. However, as soon as this resource – in effect, the glue – is reduced/removed a network typically collapses. There are several examples of this such as Creative Borders. This a function of various factors but the most important being that the cultural heritage and creative sectors are predominantly third sector and many individuals who engage do so as either volunteers, as freelancers or in a staff role which is tightly focused based on any funding. Their time is very precious for their own charity/enterprise activity and therefore limited in terms of driving or administering any strategic

network or forum if not paid or supported to do so. Without a leadership and development resource and the glue to hold it all together there is limited momentum can be achieved.

CBP, Cairngorms Trust and potentially any new Cairngorms Community forum/network are structures which could host a cultural heritage network with sufficient resource made available to do so, and also clear messaging and communications on the hosting role.

Another non-Park-based entity could host a network on a similar basis – the Heritage Trust Network or SCOTO CIC being examples. The same proviso would apply – sufficient resource is made available for this to operate effectively and not be a drain on the parent body's core remit and activity.

In addition, an existing cultural heritage entity within the Park could host a network. This could be an attraction, like one of the museums, or one of the heritage groups like Badenoch Heritage SCIO or CATERAN Ecomuseum. However, as these organisations are typically underfunded to do their core activity it will be essential that they are resourced fully to undertake the hosting and associated delivery role and that this provides a benefit to them as an organisation – there would have to be something in it for them and not simply covering outlays.

Operation

Administrative support and a leadership and developmental role are essential for any network gaining traction and delivery benefits to a networkers. A network will have important database management tasks, communication functions, event planning and delivery and potentially management of an online resources portal either operated independently by a network or a dedicated space on another organisation's digital platform (e.g. the Park Authority).

A coordinator role which is more than basic administration is recommended where digital community management is part of their remit. The leadership and developmental activity will focus on funding opportunities, project activity and partner liaison.

Resource

A comment made several times through the discussions with individuals and stakeholders was that any network will need to be resourced and can't be expected to be self-sustaining as this sector is dominated by third sector and individual interests. This comment was often then further developed to say the Park Authority should fund this as the current National Park aims refer to conserving the natural and cultural heritage of the Park and clearly any network activity (if properly established) will enhance the conservation of cultural heritage through collaboration, shared learning, joint funding bids and projects plus promotion.

There is evidence from elsewhere of other organisations offering additional support for networks to undertake specific projects and initiatives once a core commitment is made, and many welcome the collaborative footing a network provides when considering funding projects and programmes.

A key consideration is whether to establish a new organisation or to support an existing organisation which has robust governance and reporting processes in place and resource them to facilitate this network with dedicated administrative and leadership/development resources in place.

Budget Requirements

Presuming a network is not being established as a separate legal entity and it is hosted by another organisation, a basic and effective network could cost in the region of £35-40k per annum. This would cover a part time freelance coordinator/digital community manager, plus basic operational costs. A freelance role is recommended certainly in the early stages when the timing of activity will be unpredictable and flexibility will be important. They would operate with their own IT and be able to set up secure new systems on for example Google Drive. The developmental role would also be freelance. An allowance of c£5k is included for the host organisation to cover associated costs. However this is an estimate only and the detail would need to be scoped out more fully with the specific host in mind. Additional budgets would be required for projects and initiatives and any funding proposals should incorporate project management costs.

The delivery of an annual face to face conference event would be c£10-15k to cover event planning, venue costs and catering plus speaker costs and travel. Additional allowance for a travel bursary scheme is recommended. If a two day event is planned additional accommodation costs need to be considered and included in the bursary scheme.

These costs are indicative at this stage and based on SCOTO's own experience of running their network and staging 2 conference events in 2023 and 2024.

Marketing and Awareness Raising

A key aspect which has come out of the strategic project interviews and 1-2-1 qualitative interviews is the sense that the Cairngorms Cultural Heritage assets and experiences are not as well promoted as the outdoor and natural heritage assets and experiences. The three strategic initiatives have created/safeguarded cultural heritage assets and have generated new experiences, facilities and services and also content aimed at visitors and locals. Continuing to promote and raise awareness of this as a legacy to the funded projects would be warmly welcomed and also help to balance the focus of marketing content and campaigns. A network can task itself to develop and curate more content such as themed trails, event calendars etc.

CBP have indicated a keen interest in working with this content and with appropriate resources to do so, they can readily develop targeted campaign activity.

A Community Forum for Cairngorms National Park?

Historically the National Park had a formally constituted Association of Cairngorms Communities (AoCC). This however lost momentum particularly during the pandemic and at the time of writing was being wound up. However, especially in light of major initiatives like the £multi-million Cairngorms 2030 five year initiative, a new community based network of some description could be introduced to support community engagement and involvement.

The business interests in the Park already have a well-established network - CBP which is the Park wide chamber of commerce and Destination Management and Marketing Organisation.

If a new Community based forum is to be established there could be merit in considering the idea of a cultural heritage network alongside or within this as there will be clear overlaps in the people likely to engage and also the benefits being sought. Cairngorms 2030 could be the trigger for establishing a new networking structure for the Park area which covers additional topics and seeks to optimise engagement for project delivery and collaboration.

Cultural Heritage and Tourism

A Cultural Heritage Network can focus on two different aspects - a cultural heritage network for local interests that is focussed on capturing and conserving local stories of people and place, traditional skills and land management practices, local beliefs and customs, language, place names and landscape features, shinty and highland gathering activity and/or a network focussed on growing tourism and developing visitor experiences based on the area's outstanding and fascinating cultural heritage.

These are not mutually exclusive but can polarise interests and it is important to strike a balance and also dispel myths that portray tourism as a negative activity. Scotland has had a tradition of local historical societies that have helped preserve artefacts, stories and imagery, but unfortunately many of these are struggling to continue with ageing volunteers and costs to store artefacts and digitise content – with a general lack of interest and engagement from younger residents. The visitor facing activity can help engage younger people through the provision of jobs and freelance work and the use of technology.

There is therefore an important balance to be struck between preserving the unique heritage and culture of the Cairngorms – in effect what has made the place what it is today - and providing authentic visitor experiences which help conserve the heritage and also generate economic and other benefits.

The balance lies in ensuring visitors are much more aware of what is unique about the Park as a consequence of its cultural heritage and to provide opportunities for visitors (and locals) to gain a deeper understanding of this and have respect for it. An important consideration which is often misunderstood is that visitors can help support local communities in conserving and celebrating their cultural heritage through the provision of bookable and carefully curated experiences and attractions. Research by VisitScotland and others has

demonstrated that more and more visitors are seeking out opportunities to meet locals and experience cultural heritage and that they will pay for these experiences, especially where this is bespoke and not run of the mill.

This principle of visitors and the visitor economy supporting local communities is at the heart of SCOTO's own ethos on localism and community led tourism.

3 : POTENTIAL INTEREST IN HOSTING A NEW CULTURAL HERITAGE NETWORK IN CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK

As it became evident during the delivery of this piece of work that an option could be for any future network to be hosted by an existing body, rather than create a completely new entity, SCOTO reached out Cairngorms Business Partnership and the Cairngorms Trust. The discussions are outlined below.

Cairngorms Business Partnership

A constructive discussion took place with the new CEO of the CBP wherein, subject to appropriate resource being provided to enable the activity, he expressed interest in supporting a new network, helping arrange an annual conference and specifically to support with ongoing visitor facing marketing activity given CBP's DMO remit (Destination Marketing/Management Organisation). Ideas considered were whether an annual event could tie in with the annual CBP event and have session(s) dedicated to Cultural Heritage.

CBP could administer a new network if resourced to do so but did recognise through discussions with SCOTO, that the Cultural Heritage sectoral interests may query why this role sat with the Chamber OF Commerce/a business based organisation when their interests are notably third sector. This could be addressed with effective communications but could be an initial stumbling block.

A point worth noting which came out in the 1-2-1 qualitative interviews was that CBP is seen as more focused on the western area of the Park and not as active as hoped in the east (where VisitAberdeenshire also have a presence and have recently done some effective work with individuals/businesses who were interviewed). This perception could have a bearing on any proposal for CBP to host a network and benefit from some engagement activity in the east.

The Cairngorms Trust

The Cairngorms Trust, like CBP has a pan Park remit and has, for example been the administrator for EU Leader funds and more recently the CLLD (Community Led Local Development) funds. It was originally set up as a LAG (Local Action Group) for the EU Leader funding and was administered by CNPA. However with changes in this funding on the horizon and also concerns expressed about the close working with CNPA, the LAG opted to establish itself as an independent charitable organisation, and to administer other funds and projects.

The Trust could similarly facilitate a new cultural heritage network but again will need resource to do so as this isn't their core remit. Further, as this is not something that the Trust have considered, and they are currently exploring other areas of activity and new trustees, they have stated they could not commit to anything without more detail and a full board discussion. The Trust do recognise the importance of the Park's cultural heritage and that this should be supported at a grass roots level.

Key Considerations

Both organisations are therefore potential hosts of a Cultural Heritage Network should this be progressed but specifics would need to be explored in much more detail. There could also be other organisations willing to take on this role if adequate funding is available.

The distinct advantage in this type of approach is minimising dedicated set up costs and organisational governance if the primary purpose of a network is to aid collaboration rather than be to have an independent voice. However, communications will be vital as both organisations set out here have a specific remit which may at first appear as at odds with a cultural heritage network. The role of them being a host will need explained and also a network should have its own steering group/committee and reporting processes.