



Cairngorms
National Park

Pàirc Nàiseanta a'
Mhonaidh Ruaidh

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



Scottish Community Tourism Network CIC

May 2024

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

SETTING THE SCENE

SCOTO were appointed by Cairngorms National Park Authority in December 2023 to undertake preparatory work to explore the potential for establishing a Cultural Heritage Network that brings people together and adds value to those most closely involved in cultural heritage across the National Park. This piece of work has been designed to inform the next steps.

The primary purpose of SCOTO's commission is to engage with a broad range of key cultural heritage players who are active in the National Park, to identify:

- 1. Whether they would find more contact with other individuals or groups helpful to their own interest or to help in raising the profile of cultural heritage of the Park.*
- 2. Whether they would participate and in what ways they would want to do so.*

At the time of writing, the Park Authority does not currently have a budget allocated to run and support a network and this preparatory work was undertaken in this context.

SCOTO is the recently formed Community Tourism Network for Scotland, which operates as a Cooperative CIC. SCOTO's network spans Scotland and its activity includes online and face to face networking, online resources, small grant support programmes, data gathering, contract services and industry leadership and representation. SCOTO works closely with cultural heritage providers and

interests across Scotland and also has directly experience of setting up a new network for a predominantly third sector group.

SCOTO embarked on this Cairngorms National Park engagement activity early in 2024. CNPA provided an initial list of key stakeholders which SCOTO then supplemented through discussions with key partners in the area and local contacts. This updated list is provided as an output from the commission.

To glean views and opinions, SCOTO undertook four key activities.

1. *An online survey*
2. *Online meetings with representatives from three longer term cultural heritage initiatives within the National Park*
 - *Badenoch The Storylands Great Place Project*
 - *Tomintoul & Glenlivet Landscape Partnership*
 - *Cateran Ecomuseum*
3. *1-2-1 conversations with individuals expressing interest in being interviewed via the online survey.*
4. *Conversations with other pan Park groups and organisations*

Additional time was spent considering experience elsewhere and key lessons learned.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

Online Survey

The online survey was conducted on SurveyMonkey and initially shared with the list of contacts compiled for this project. The initial list had 82 individuals and organisations and this was supplemented through discussions and engagement - with an eventual list of 213 provided as an output from this contract.

An initial invite setting out the intent of the work and a request to complete the survey was sent out early in January with various reminders subsequently issued. Latterly social media was used to target specific relevant local groups.

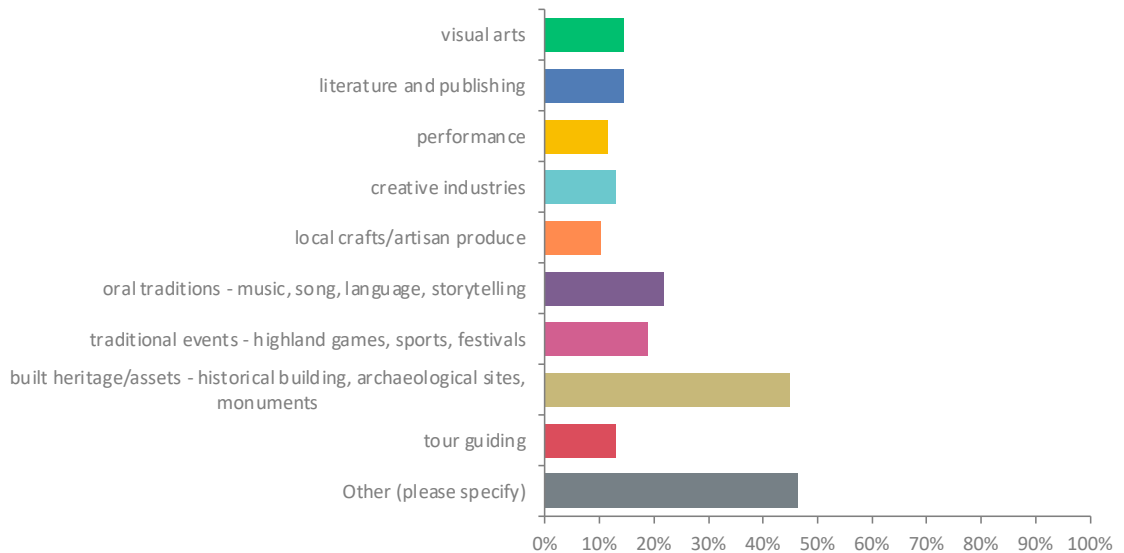
By 15 March 2024 69 responses had been completed.

A blank version of the survey template is provided as Appendix 1 in PDF format.

Diagrammatic Summary of Key Survey Findings

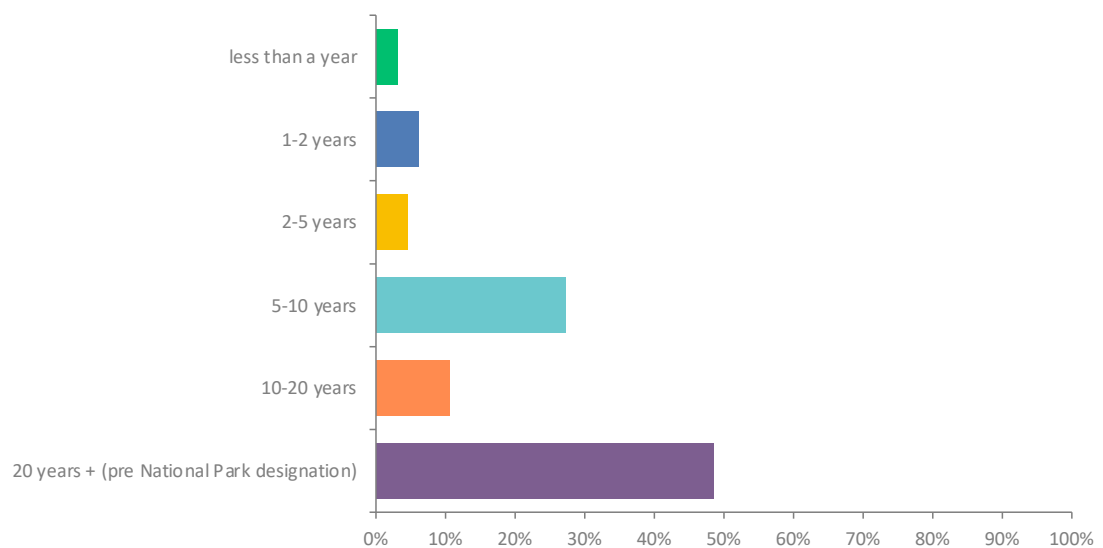
Q1: What cultural activity/sector are you involved with in the National Park - (please select all that apply)?

Answered: 69 Skipped: 0



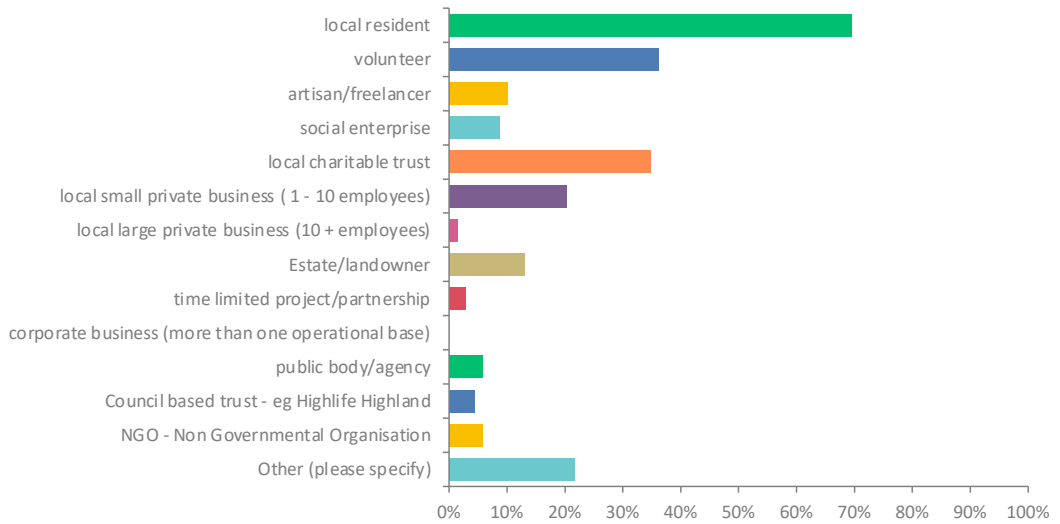
Q2: How long have you been involved in this activity in Cairngorms?

Answered: 66 Skipped: 3



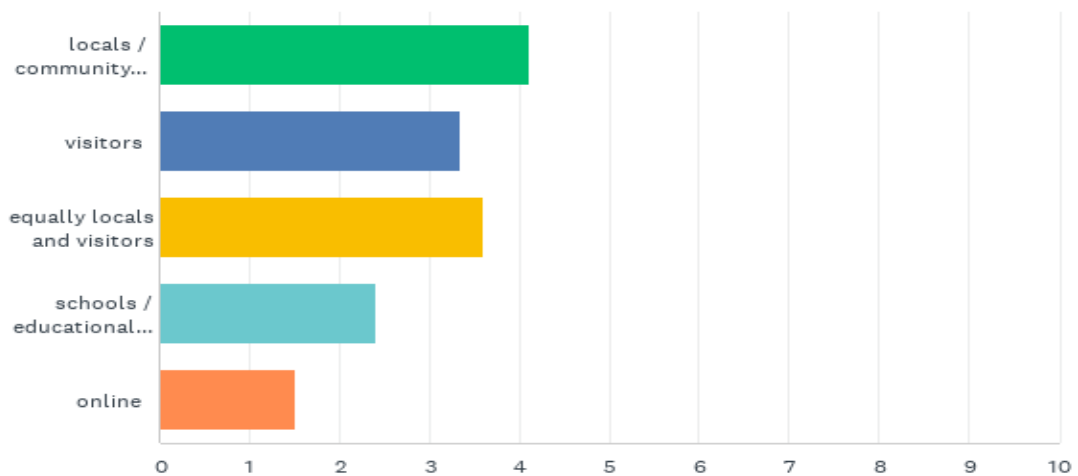
Q3: In what capacity are you interested in culture/who do you represent? Please select all that apply. If you do not readily fit the categories given please use the 'other' comment box.

Answered: 69 Skipped: 0



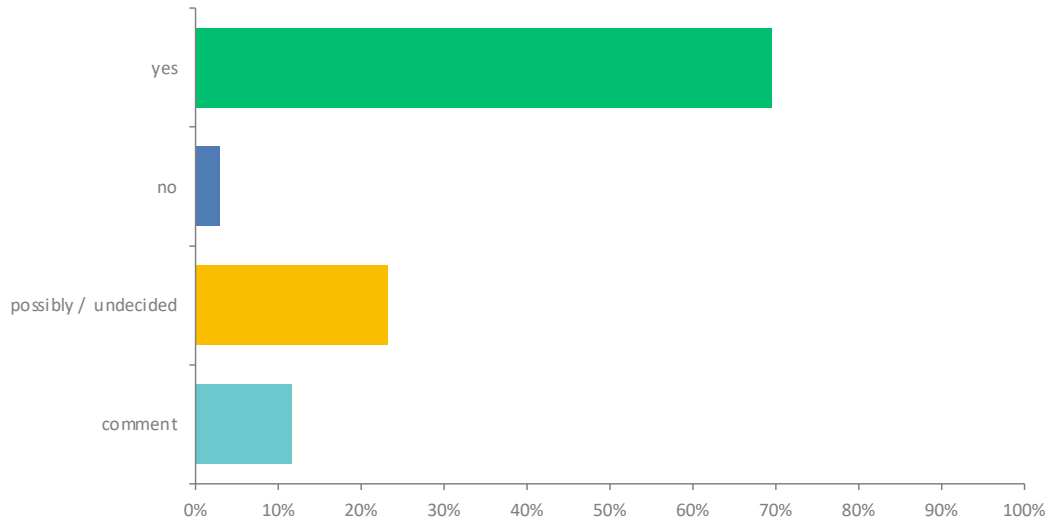
Q4: Who is currently your main audience/customer/beneficiary - please rank in order of importance showing the most important first ?

Answered: 66 Skipped: 3



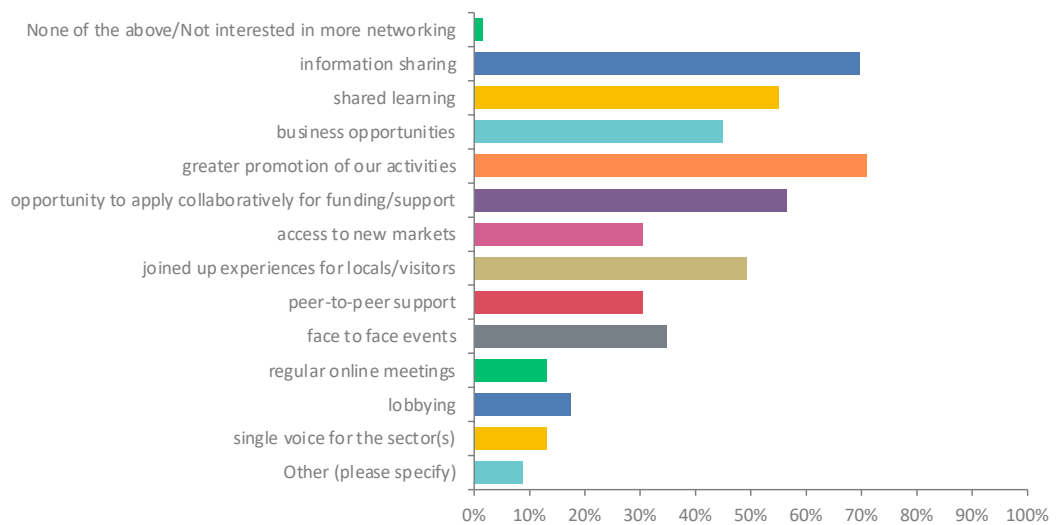
Q8: Would you find more contact and collaboration with other individuals or groups helpful to your own interest in cultural heritage and/or raising the profile of cultural heritage in the Park?

Answered: 69 Skipped: 0



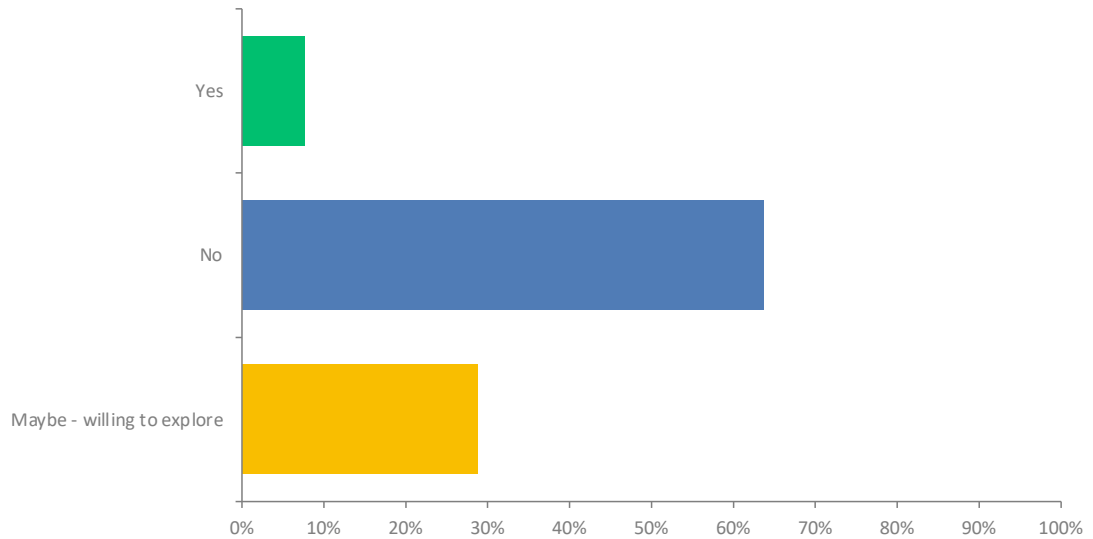
Q9: What benefits would you seek from more networking/collaboration? Please tick all that apply.

Answered: 69 Skipped: 0



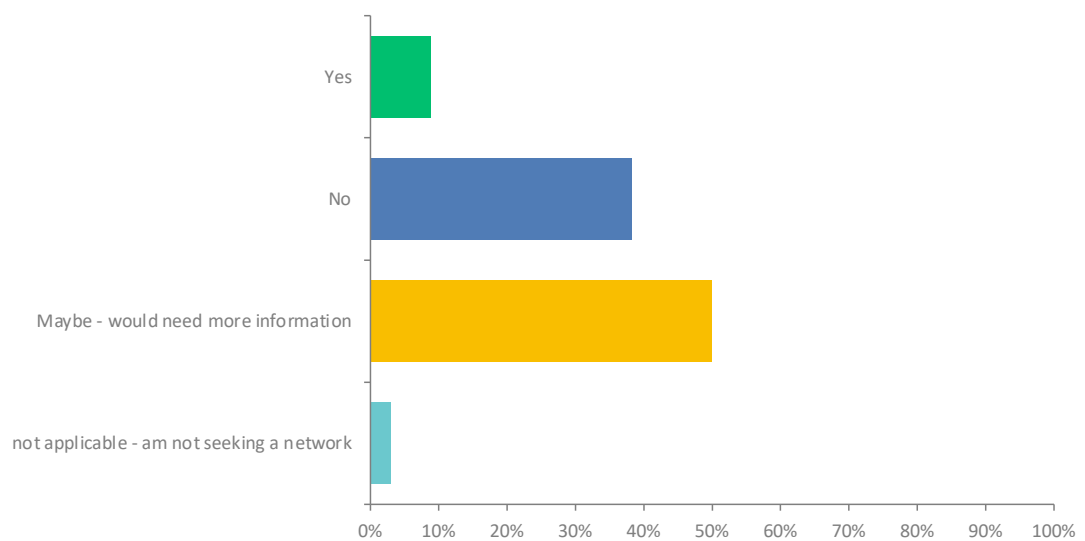
Q19: Would you be interested in joining a steering group to develop a network(s)

Answered: 66 Skipped: 3



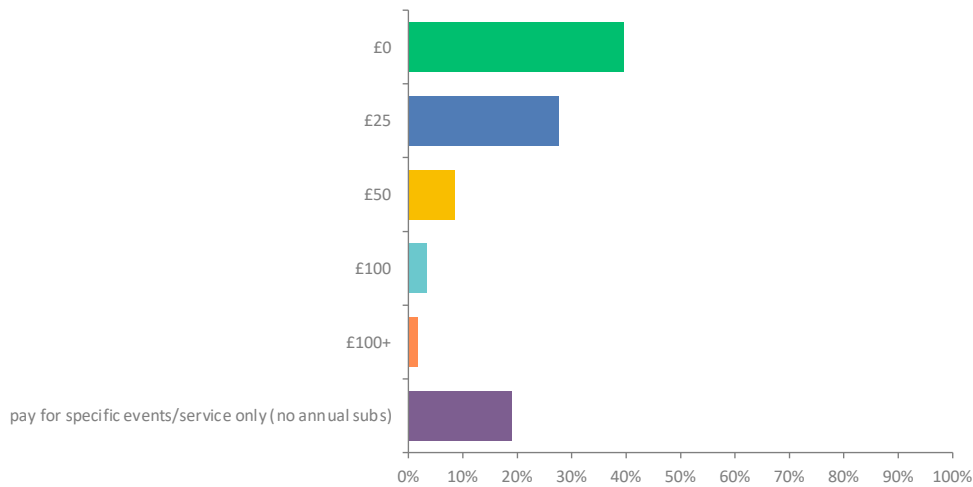
Q15: Would you be willing to pay a fee to join a network (presuming it delivers the benefits identified earlier) to help cover operational costs?

Answered: 68 Skipped: 1



Q16: How much (roughly) do you think you'd be willing to pay annually to be part of a network?

Answered: 58 Skipped: 11



Overview and Analysis of Survey Findings

The survey highlights are noted below:

- *The survey was live from 9 January 2024 to 15 March 2024. 20 questions were posed with the majority requiring selection of an option(s) and with scope to add additional comments if desired.*
- *All entries were completed in full.*
- *Responses came from a broad range of different interests including oral traditions, events, built heritage, tour guiding and creative interests.*
- *A significant number of respondents (56) have been involved in cultural heritage activity for more than 5 years.*
- *Only 18.2% of the respondents operate at a Park-wide level with 39.4% operating at a community level.*
- *69% of the respondents are local residents, 37% are volunteers and 35% are part of a local charitable trust.*
- *Most questions allowed for comments and many were provided which demonstrate interest in the topic and convey excellent*

insights into cultural heritage in the National Park plus the concept of a network.

The significant survey responses relating to the idea of a potential cultural heritage network are:

CONTACT & COLLABORATION: 69.5% stated they would find more contact and collaboration helpful and 23.2% said possibly/undecided.

LIKELY PARTICIPATION : 66.2% of respondents would participate in a network if created; 4.6% wouldn't and 29.2% weren't sure.

TYPE OF INTEREST : 63% had a generic interest in cultural heritage and 40% had a more specific interest.

BENEFITS : The primary benefits participants would welcome were greater promotion of their activities (71%); information sharing (69.5%); collaborative funding applications (56.5%); shared learning (55%); joined up experiences for locals/visitors (49%).

NETWORKING ACTIVITY: In the region of 50% stated they would find an annual Park-wide face to face conference useful, and nearly 60% would be interested in an informal What's App/Facebook group.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Only 9% stated they would be willing to pay a fee; 40% said no and 48% would need more information. When value of fee was questioned, only 13.8% would be willing to pay more than £25, 40% not willing to pay any fee and 19% would be willing to pay for specific events/services with no annual subs.

STEERING GROUP: 63.6% stated they would not be interested in joining a steering group; just under 7.6% (5 people) would be interested and 28.8% may be willing to get involved.

ADDITIONAL INPUT: 23 people stated they would be interested in being interviewed as part of this scoping work; 28 weren't interested and 16 requested more information.

CONTACT DETAILS: 45 people provided their contact details and these have been cross checked with the project data base and supplemented accordingly.

As noted previously many respondents took time to provide additional comments against a number of the questions. These comments provide valuable insights and also perspectives that are definitely worth considering if a network is progressed.

As a notable percentage of responses to different survey questions were 'undecided' there is a clear indication that people are looking for a more concrete proposal to respond to – which will follow on from this preparatory phase of work. The survey in itself has been a key mechanism for better understanding what people would welcome and how much it would be valued. Communication to this effect will be welcomed.

1-2-1 Qualitative Interviews

SCOTO reached out to the 16 people who had expressed interest in being interviewed by early March 2024. 13 of these were interviewed on google meet/telephone/face to face by 15 March 2024. One was not able to participate through being on holiday, one took part in a separate zoom call and another had to cancel.

A further 7 then responded to the survey also expressing interest in being interviewed. Should the principle of a network be pursued, there would be merit in reaching out to those additional individuals at that stage.

List of Interviewees

The following interests were interviewed as part of this contract. All had completed the survey and indicated an interest in being interviewed. This list includes the three strategic cultural heritage projects which are also included as case studies. The specific comments on a potential cultural heritage network are collated and included in the comments below.

Organisation	Location
Badenoch - The Storylands Great Places Project	Kingussie
Badenoch Heritage	Badenoch
Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey (VABS)	Badenoch & Strathspey
The CATERAN Ecomuseum	Blairgowrie
Tomintoul and Glenlivet Development Trust	Tomintoul and Glenlivet

Artist	Dufftown (does work in the Park)
Castle Roy	Nethybridge
Rails to Grantown	Grantown on Spey
Crown Estate	Tomintoul
Speybank Studio	Grantown on Spey
Braemar Community Ltd	Braemar
Speybank Studio	Grantown-on-Spey
Braemar Castle	Braemar
Duke of Rothesay Highland Games Pavillion	Braemar
Friends of Carrbridge Station	Carrbridge
High Life Highland	Newtonmore
Cairngorms Crofters and Farmers Community Ltd*	Kingussie

* *The Cairngorms Crofters and Farmers Community Ltd is a new group which was launched at the beginning of March 2024 and includes supporting and promoting cultural heritage in its aims and objectives. At the time of writing it currently has 11 directors and 95 members from across the Park.*

Key Topics Covered

1. *Background of each interviewee and their interest in cultural heritage.*
2. *Pros and cons of a Cultural Heritage Network*
3. *Views on networking opportunities.*
4. *Cairngorms National Park.*
5. *Views on Funding.*
6. *Any other questions*

The conversations were productive and explored many aspects of the Park's cultural heritage and the concept of a network. The interviews are summarised under considerations and ideas.

Considerations

- **Purpose** - *The majority of interviewees were keen and interested but wanted the why, the who, the how, what and where established with key objectives and targets set out from the outset. A cultural heritage network must have a tangible benefit to the individuals who engage but also to the culture and cultural heritage of the Cairngorms National Park. A network should be locally led and inform CNPA policy and activity relating to cultural heritage.*
- **Time and Costs** - *The biggest two issues were time and also that many cultural heritage activities are volunteer-based and to get involved there would have to be a tangible benefit to them and the business/project. Also, the cost of travel and any additional costs needs to be considered. The majority believed that the Cairngorms National*

Park should provide the resource for the administration and to help arrange the conference idea and other events. However, a minority suggested if funded is available an existing local group may be prepared to organise the network especially if the funding was for a sustained period.

- **Sustainability** - *There was concern from all that if this is set up it should be seen for the long term, not an annual or two-year funding initiative, as this had happened too often in the past. To work effectively it has to have longer-term funding and purpose.*
- **Cairngorms National Park** - *For some, the Park Authority has been helpful with grant funding and specific Park Authority staff members supporting projects and initiatives. Others did not know who to contact within the Park Authority in relation to cultural heritage, or how they could work with the Park Authority and therefore would like to learn more. Others felt the Park Authority communications were reactive, not proactive. There was also a majority view that the Park Authority supported the great outdoors more than the cultural sector, so this initiative was a step forward as there was so much to offer concerning culture and cultural heritage within the National Park.*
- **Face to Face versus online** - *Most people would prefer face-to-face events and unanimously would all welcome an annual cultural heritage conference. Mixed views were expressed on regional events. Again, it was unanimous that face-to-face was more effective for networking and sharing but that online was good for time constraints and especially with the geography of the National Park. Time and participation in other groups were seen as a concern and constraint for regional events.*
- **New Approaches** – *many flagged that they struggle to engage younger residents and gave examples of their local historic societies and heritage groups being at risk with some already wound up. A new network can hopefully be funded/tasked to help find new innovative approaches to conserving local culture and heritage and engaging younger people. Many felt they operate in isolation and could learn new ways of working through a network and also be more efficient by*

having access to templates and being able to ask for peer-to-peer ideas and suggestions.

Ideas

- **Conference** – Annual conference with examples of best practices from elsewhere and including short presentations from the cultural heritage sector across the National Park - plus sufficient time for the all-important chance to network.
- **Marketing and Product Development** – This was seen in two ways. One to assist with marketing individual cultural heritage businesses/projects/experiences but also collaborative activity which targets specific consumers and to give a sense of critical mass. Ideas included themed trails across the National Park, consumer guides, open days and specific collaborations to ensure the sector was much more visible to visitors already in the Park plus potential visitors considering the Park as a destination. Most interviewees felt current marketing activity by the Park Authority and CBP focuses more on the outdoors and natural heritage and there are significant cultural heritage assets and existing content that could be much better promoted.
- **Locals versus Visitors** – Many felt a lot of attention seems to focus on projects that develop cultural heritage for visitors, and that not all experiences are wholly authentic. Comments were made about better promoting what is on offer to local residents and to encourage them to engage in events and activities but also to help them consider volunteering opportunities to support this activity.
- **Highlighting Grant Funding Opportunities** – This was seen as a minefield with many not feeling confident about where to look for funding opportunities relevant to their activity and a group like this could highlight available grants and also give guidance on how to fill in grant funding forms and highlight collaborative opportunities.
- **Definition of Culture and Cultural Heritage** – Most agreed this is hard to define and covers a wide sector. Culture and cultural heritage encapsulates what has made the Park the place it is and covers a broad range of topics which should be scoped out and then agreed as

the basis for a network. Work is underway with the creative sector and it will be important to differentiate between creative activity and culture and cultural heritage. There is an overlap and definitions are therefore important.

- **Lobbying** – *Two people in particular saw that a network like this would allow for more effective lobbying, particularly to the Scottish Government, The Highlands Council and Highland and Islands Enterprise, with a more consistent voice for the sector. This relates to any new network also liaising with other cultural heritage networks across Scotland.*
- **Online Space** – *Many expressed interest in an online platform which would allow everyone to share resources and ideas in a central easily found location. A What's App group was seen as a positive communication and networking tool for the majority.*
- **Collaboration** – *Sharing ideas and information came through all the interviews with additional ideas including any templates and material produced for individual projects being able to be shared within a network. Copyright would need to be agreed to allow this to be shared and ideally used across all members of the group so that the wheel did not have to be continually reinvented. Also, a group like this could look at ways to extend the season through cultural events programmes and working together to cross promote each other.*

Overall, the interviews revealed the passion people have for their local cultural heritage and demonstrated a strong desire to see it conserved and valued. They also expressed that visitors should be able to enjoy the Park's unique cultural heritage, and to experience it in an authentic and meaningful way. It is important that any new network helps explain the important relationship between cultural conservation and authentic visitor experiences.

An important consideration is that most wanted specific details to respond to in terms of a network rather than just the principle (which was also mirrored in the number of 'undecided' responses in the survey).

Clearly there is an important balance to be struck here as it will be essential to fully understand what is needed and wanted, what value people will place on a network if provided and then how best this could be delivered – and of course if

and how this can then be funded. A degree of iteration is needed and most through the conversations recognised the importance of this preparatory work before reaching any conclusions. Of note, the survey has now provided very useful insights into what the many players would welcome, what benefits this would provide for them and the very clear conclusion that this would not be viable as a self-financing network.

CASE STUDIES

Two areas were explored – the experience of three recent strategic cultural heritage partnership initiatives within Cairngorms National Park and experience elsewhere.

Experience of Three Strategic Cultural Heritage Initiatives within Cairngorms National Park

In line with the brief the three projects – Glenlivet & Tomintoul Landscape Partnership, Badenoch The Storylands Great Place Project and CATERAN Ecomuseum - were interviewed and the key findings are noted below.

All three projects have benefited from the multi-year strategic approach which has allowed focused attention to be given to cultural heritage within their geographic area of interest. Each has also received significant partnership funding from the National Park and others with a core funding partner enabling the strategic approach.

- *Badenoch The Storylands was a National Heritage Lottery Funded Great Places pilot initiative running between 2018 and 2021.*
- *Tomintoul & Glenlivet was a National Heritage Lottery Funded Landscape Partnership running between 2017 and 2020.*
- *CATERAN Ecomuseum in Perthshire and Angus was primarily supported by EU Leader funding 2014-2020 and is a social enterprise.*

Each has had an independent local structure created/in place to drive the project forward and has benefitted from considerable funding and in kind resource over their period of operation. The National Park provided support in kind through finance, project management and other mechanisms which was welcomed, especially where cashflow is a consideration. Having a dedicated

lead officer/manager answerable to the project board has been essential as has a dedicated project management resource.

Each project has been reliant on local volunteers (and others) sitting on the project boards and working groups and it was noted that future projects and initiatives of this type and scale should include a daily fee allowance or similar for these individuals to be able to dedicate time to the project and also reclaim travel and other expenses.

Legacy is a key challenge for all three initiatives especially where staff resource has concluded, and any ongoing activity therefore falls to volunteers. Neither the Badenoch or CATERAN projects have their own ongoing budget for marketing and promotion. Tomintoul & Glenlivet have maintenance commitments beyond the main project period which helps with physical maintenance of capital investments.

There has been an expectation that projects of this type can become self-sustaining but reality has proven there are many challenges in achieving this, not least having a marketable and bookable product that will secure sufficient sales to wash its face.

While support is provided by the Park Authority and CBP as the Park wide DMO (Destination Marketing Organisation), all three projects believe more could and should be done with ongoing marketing as these projects each generated notable assets, services and experiences plus high quality content of interest to visitors. An important legacy would be to continue to market and promote these.

CNPA and especially CBP have suitable reach and platforms which could provide a robust and ongoing basis for visitor (and local) awareness and inspiration about the Park's cultural heritage. In addition they have relationships with VisitScotland who are always seeking new content. As CBP is funded by its members and these cultural heritage initiatives are not typically Chamber of Commerce members, it is clear that additional resource is needed to justify CBP dedicating time to cultural heritage and project specific campaign activity. As the projects have no legacy funding, is this a remit for CNPA to ensure the outputs and outcomes are woven into the destination marketing and promotional activity?

This aspect was presented as a challenge. As noted elsewhere, there is a widely held sense amongst those interviewed that Cairngorms marketing via CBP is very strong on the outdoors and natural heritage experience. The cultural heritage has had very limited focus to date but there is now high-quality content and activities for use in campaign activity. A resourced Cultural Heritage Network could work in partnership with CBP on curating and promoting ongoing cultural heritage content and events.

Experience Elsewhere

SCOTO considered experience of Cultural Heritage Networks from elsewhere.

SCOTO explored which of the other National Parks in the UK have established a cultural heritage network and discovered that none of the UK Parks have done so. Conversations revealed that this is partly because a need had not been expressed, and also that most cultural heritage activity, by its very nature, tended to be more local than Park wide and also project based.

There are examples of community networks and partnerships. Loch Lomond and the Trossachs is a good example where a Community Partnership was established in 2003 and provided much needed support for the Park's communities to develop community action plans, provide project delivery support to communities and deliver Park wide initiatives as well as communications and networking opportunities. Some of this activity did focus on cultural heritage. However, the Community Partnership was wound up in 2021 in recognition of significant changes in national priorities, policies and funding plus changes in the operating environment with the refreshed and urgent focus on the Climate Emergency and biodiversity crisis. Loch Lomond and the Trossachs also had a Countryside Trust and an independent review highlighted a single charity would be a better way forward. As the Community Partnership was wound up the Countryside Trust took on an increased role in working with and supporting community groups in achieving positive actions to address the climate and biodiversity crises. The Park Authority provides support and funding to the Countryside Trust. This Trust does differ from the Cairngorms Trust which administered EU Leader and other funds. In Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, these funds are administered by council area-based LAGs. The

decision to reduce to a single charity does reinforce the idea of not setting up a completely new entity for cultural heritage.

Within Scotland there are several cultural heritage networks but these tend to be more specific than generic – eg area based Museums and Heritage Centre Forums. Two examples are the Highland Museums Forum which brings together the Museums and Heritage Centres within Highland Council area, and the Argyll & Bute Museums and Heritage Forum (ABMHF). These form part of Forum Connections which was a four-year project funded by the National Lottery Fund and with the support of Museums Galleries Scotland to encourage greater partnership working in Scottish museums through geographic forums. Both the Highlands and Argyll & Bute forums already existed and have benefited from this programme.

The Highlands Museums Forum is a very well regarded network which has some members from within and close to the National Park in Highland Council area. The forum provides regular information exchanges and also opportunities for members to discuss matters relating to their ongoing management. They promote the sharing of services and organise seminars, conferences and workshops. They also cooperate on touring exhibitions and joint publicity and mutual promotion of facilities and exhibitions.

ABMHF is a SCIO and offers free membership to individuals and organisations. It was originally set up to support the small independent museums in the council area on their journey to accreditation but has since extended its sphere of activity to support all aspects of the heritage sector and including businesses, individuals and community groups and embracing tangible and intangible aspects of the area's history. It is involved in training, and collaborative working with partners. They hold online heritage café events and are currently delivering a Creating Connections project funded by Museums Galleries Scotland and are providing GIS Mapping training and community meetings to discuss local heritage sector challenges and explore new heritage initiatives.

Of note Argyll & Bute also has CHARTS – Culture Heritage and Arts Assembly – which was set up to bring all three sectors together and was conceived through the desire to create a sustainable future for the overall culture, heritage and arts sector in Argyll. It is a two-tier SCIO with a board of trustees and a regional steering group. It was developed through a Creative Scotland Place Partnership

Programme with additional EU leader funding and is currently funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund, Bord na Gaidhlig and Argyll and Bute Council and receives project-related funding and support from multiple organisations. It was originally envisaged CHARTS would embrace ABMHF but the latter has continued and formalised its own structure as a SCIO recognising their very specific heritage interests.

The three strategic Cultural Heritage partnership projects within Cairngorms each demonstrate that they operated at an appropriate geographic scale that had cohesion across the area's cultural heritage. They each produced notable outcomes but also now face challenges with the funding concluded and no or limited resource for legacy activity.

Experience elsewhere suggests that a general Cultural Heritage network over as large an area of geography as Cairngorms National Park which considers tangible and intangible heritage interests is possibly too big and too generic.

However, the survey does suggest there is interest in this and key considerations are set out in the appendix should funding be available to take this forward.

NEXT STEPS

For any sectoral network to gain traction and succeed there typically needs to be clarity on purpose for anyone/any organisation to know if it is likely to benefit them, and to have an immediate focus on an activity which will demonstrate its value. In this case a Park-wide face to face conference type event would achieve this and be a good basis for evaluating what next.

The survey concluded that in the region of 50% of those involved in cultural heritage activity would find an annual Park-wide face to face conference useful, and nearly 60% would be interested in an informal What's App/Facebook group. Other activities were also of interest but these two stood out as important early actions if the principle of a Cultural Heritage Network is agreed.

SCOTO recommends both are supported in early course without a commitment to the exact format and structure of a network. The premise is the idea of a network will be the subject of the conference event. The What's App group (recommended over a Facebook group as it facilitates instant conversations and response) could be the initial basis for scoping out ideas for speakers, topics, and activities to include in the programme. A WhatsApp or Facebook group does need an administrator(s) to simply invite and approve members and also monitor for any inappropriate content.

The intervening period between now and a conference taking place can be used to engage more people in discussions and also allow this to be considered in parallel with discussions about a possible new Community Forum for the Park area to replace the Association of Cairngorms Communities.

An observation was made during the interviews that the annual CBP conference has been a success over a number of years and is welcomed by local business operators. It provides an opportunity to network and learn from each other as well as hear inspirational speakers and learn about innovative initiatives from elsewhere. There could be a model developed that brings different interests (including cultural heritage) together for a larger gathering that has themed breakout sessions and sections within an overall programme.

A recommended first step would be for the Park Authority to allocate funding and engage a suitable partner to facilitate the development and delivery of a Park-wide cultural heritage gathering as a follow up action to this preparatory work. The format of this gathering or conference event should ideally be designed by working with practitioners and residents to scope out a suitable location and programme. Engaging with those who have engaged to date would be beneficial, notably those who provided contact details when responding to the survey.

When designing the programme it will be important to establish in advance what if any commitment there is to funding something as a consequence of the gathering and over a sustained period. This could be as simple as an annual conference for three years, or support for a development resource and online platform as examples. Expectation management is critical as if the only commitment is for this one-off event then the programme needs to be designed with this in mind.

Allowance should also be made for travel bursaries to help participants attend this initial gathering and a good model to consider would be a two-day event which includes an informal evening event and site visits. This is a tried and tested model used by many third-sector networks.

An important next step will be communication. A significant number of local people have engaged in this preparatory work and therefore early feedback should be provided on what the anticipated next steps are and any key principles that are being agreed at this and any subsequent stage. In addition it will be useful to communicate how people can continue to engage and who the point of contact is. SCOTO can help facilitate this.

CONCLUSIONS

SCOTO is delighted to have had the opportunity to undertake this contract for the Park Authority exploring whether the local cultural heritage players would find more contact with other individuals or groups helpful to their own interest or to help in raising the profile of cultural heritage of the Park and whether they would participate in a formal network and in what ways they would want to do so. The key areas of activity have been an online survey and various conversations with different players from across the Park.

The activity progressed has confirmed there is an appetite for a cultural heritage network to be established and a number of benefits could be achieved.

However a number of aspects need to be considered.

A network typically brings together practitioners with common interests and a network provides them with added value which can range from peer-to-peer support, shared learning, shared resources, shared promotion, joint funding and joint projects – as examples. However in the case of cultural heritage there are two strands of interest – a network which supports practitioners and helps them do what they do better, and a network which helps preserve the area's cultural heritage. It will be important to fully scope out and be clear on what the actual purpose of any new network is and how it will achieve this.

Any network would need to be supported in terms of administration and ideally should also have a dedicated leadership and development resource. As

conserving the natural and cultural heritage is one of the National Park's four aims, there was a strong belief that the Park Authority budget should support this network. However, at the time of this preparatory work being progressed there is no budget allocated by the Park Authority for this purpose.

Not many expressed interest in joining a steering group, as many are already acting in a voluntary capacity dealing with cultural heritage in their local area but would happily engage in a network and get involved in different activities of relevance to them. With a leadership and development resource and some form of advisory group structure with key players from relevant public agencies and larger staffed cultural heritage organisations – eg the Highland Folk Museum – a network could be responsible for delivering a number of outputs in line with the National Park aims. This does however require a budget to be allocated for this purpose.

The survey and subsequent conversations have also highlighted that there is notable interest in a network which, over and above providing support for those delivering cultural heritage experiences and attractions, helps those who have lived within the Park for many years and/or are engaged in cultural events, traditions and skills to secure support to conserve these important aspects of local culture and cultural heritage. Exploring how a new cultural heritage network in the Cairngorms could innovate and help address the widely experienced issue of traditional historic societies running out of steam would be significant outcome. What is a contemporary technology enabled equivalent that engages younger people?

The role of a new network in conserving the Cairngorms culture and cultural heritage does need careful consideration as cultural heritage is at the heart of the first National Park aim. Concerns are being expressed that it is not being prioritised and this network could be a means to address this.

However, a key conclusion from this preparatory work is that while there is interest in a cultural heritage network being established and a number of benefits it could achieve, it is very unlikely that this could be self-funded through fees and subscriptions from the players, and equally there is a stated limit on how many players would be willing or able to devote their time to establishing and running this as a steering group/management committee. One idea that did get a lot of support in the survey and through the conversations was a park-

wide cultural heritage conference. A one-off face-to-face event would provide a platform for networking as well as the opportunity to gauge how useful this type of networking event actually is for the players, and also what specific ideas may be stimulated by bringing the players together.

Given the numbers who have engaged enthusiastically in this preparatory work, early communication from CNPA on any agreed next steps will be important and also demonstrate that CNPA value the input provided and are considering the implications and possibilities.

SCOTO

28 May 2024

APPENDICES

SEE SEPARATE PDF DOCUMENT