
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: CEO REPORT & CONVENER UPDATE

Prepared by: GRANT MOIR, CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Purpose:

- I. To highlight to Board Members the main strategic areas of work that are being directed by Management Team. These are areas where significant staff resources are being directed to deliver with partners the aspirations of the National Park Partnership Plan.

Conservation:

- a) **Cairngorms National Park Forest Strategy:** Board approved the final draft of the Forest strategy on 28th September with minor amendments. The strategy is now ready for publishing as soon as the Foreword is signed off. We aim to formally launch the strategy in January with a public meeting.
- b) **Cairngorms Capercaillie Framework:** 5 new members of staff have been recruited to work on the £550,000 HLF and LEADER supported development phase of the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project. The development phase includes a pilot programme of community engagement work in Carr-bridge, putting people at the heart of conservation decision making, alongside information gathering and planning for a £3.5 million delivery phase application in December 2019.
- c) **East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership:** The focus of the partners has been on providing and collating data on key habitats and species across the partnership area. Initial phase of Wader Monitoring project (in partnership with BTO) complete. Peatland Restoration projects underway on Balmoral, Invercauld and Mar. Potential peatland projects identified for 2019 on Glenavon, Glenlivet, Mar Lodge. Recent woodland expansion and potential quantified. Existing muirburn plans reviewed and mapping in progress with Mar Estate & Balmoral. Collecting and collating data on wildlife management (including Mountain Hares) with view to development of a planned management approach. Training & implementation of mountain hare monitoring as developed by JHI/GWCT for SNH in progress. Developing proposal for Ballater-based interpretation facility.
- d) **Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership:** is progressing well. The Discovery Centre is up and running (although closed now for the winter). Fantastic work has been achieved on farms to improve the water environment including bank stabilisation with woody debris and live willow spiling and more recently removal of obstructions to migrating salmon. Stabilisation of Blairfindy castle has presented a

major challenge for the team and the TGLP Board but recent excellent detailed work by architects we hope will enable us to move forward with this major project. On 29th November the *Tomintoul and Glenlivet – Cairngorms Dark Sky Park* will be launched in Tomintoul – this is a major achievement for the community and a great accolade for the National Park.

- a) **Cairngorms Nature:** The review of the first Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (2013-2018) was well received by stakeholders and partners at the Cairngorms Nature seminar in June 2018. The on-line report <http://cairngorms.co.uk/working-partnership/national-park-strategies/cnap> describes the partnership's main achievements and progress against targets. Consultation has finished on the next Action Plan (2019 – 2024) and this will be launched with an exhibition at the Scottish Parliament 19-21 February 2019. This will be hosted by Graeme Dey MSP.

Visitor Experience:

- a) **Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum:** Former CNPA board member and Head Ranger at Glen Tanar Estate retired from chair of CLOAF in November after six years of service along with two other members. We will recruit four new members in early 2019 making a total of 12 including one CNPA board member. A new chair will be elected at the first of the bi-annual meeting in May 2019.
- b) **Long Distance Routes:**
- i. **Speyside Way:** It is anticipated that the final planning applications will be determined early 2019 subject to agreeing a safe road crossing point. Funding is in now in place from Low Carbon Travel and Transport (LCTT) Challenge Fund to complete the 'new build' to Newtonmore in 2019. In addition to path construction in 2019 work on signage, interpretation and creating a start/finish point at Newtonmore will be undertaken.
 - ii. **Deeside Way:** A planning application has been resubmitted for the path line from Braemar to Invercauld Bridge. Sustrans are now only funding multi-use tarmac paths so if successful in planning other sources of funding will need to be secured to build this section.
- c) **Mountains and People Project:** The five year Mountains and People project within both National Parks in Scotland is approaching its fourth year. The work includes significant upgrades to 52km of key mountain paths, and the involvement and commitment of people through training, volunteering and learning. CNPA are working to maintain a sustainable legacy at the end of the project in both path maintenance and public involvement through volunteering.
- d) **Active Aviemore:** The partnership comprising CNPA, Highland Council, Hitrans and Sustrans has now delivered outline plans for delivering segregated multi-use paths through the village that have been approved by both CNPA and Highland Council. The first phase of detailed, costed, designs for the multiuse path will be for produced the area in and around the new hospital. These will be undertaken in first half of 2019 and will include local consultation.

- e) **Glenmore:** In partnership with Forest Enterprise Scotland we have submitted a successful bid (subject to planning consent) to the Visit Scotland Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund to construct a multi-use path through Glenmore linking car parks, visitor attractions and the path network. Detailed design is now underway with planning consent submission aimed for February 2019 and build autumn 2019. Forest Enterprise Scotland is redeveloping their 'visitor management'. Plan with public consultation planned for March 2019. Further work is required on implementation of the **Cairngorm and Glenmore Strategy** overall to ensure that key development proposals are well-integrated and the public can contribute effectively but this will await the ongoing developments at CairnGorm Mounatin being resolved.

- f) **Volunteering:** To date 14 volunteer rangers have been trained and are supporting the work of six partner ranger services. It is outstanding to report that, nominated by Balmoral Estate, CNP Volunteer Rangers Keira Macfarland and Leo Hunt were selected as the winners of the NPUK Volunteer Awards, in the individual volunteer category, for successfully administering heart re-start to a dying victim. The next round of recruitment of up to 12 rangers will take place in February 2019. Outputs to date have secured an additional 10 months funding from Leader+.

- g) **Education and Inclusion:** Following the Europarc Conference we wish to support the development of a youth council taking forward the EUROPARC Youth Manifesto in Cairngorms. The next steps are covered in Board Paper 7. Next year both 'Into the Mountain' and 'Writer in Residence' projects will encourage people to creatively celebrate the outstanding culture of Cairngorms. Both projects are supported by Creative Scotland, with Woodland Trust supporting the 'Writer' programme.

- h) **Information and Interpretation:** Work continues in redesigning the Visitor Leaflets for 2019 with significant re-draft of 'Explore for a Day' with SNH. We are also in discussion with more communities to support the creation of Local Information Centres across the National Park. Cateran Ecomuseum has now secured significant funding to promote and interpret the area and we are supporting this work with obvious links to Snow Roads Scenic Route and Royal Deeside.

- i) **Snow Roads Scenic Route:** Cairngorms Business Partnership has launched both the website and mobile phone app interpreting the special qualities of the route and sharing 90 reasons to make an enjoyable exploration a 'slow road'. Once loaded to a mobile phone this app works on gps and does not require reception, making it useable along the whole route. CBP won the Aberdeen City and Shire 2019 Tourism Innovation Award in November for this work. We are still awaiting installation of tourism signs in Moray and Highland Council area.

Rural Development:

- a) **Local Development Plan 2020:** The CNPA Board are being asked to consider and approve the proposed Plan for consultation at this meeting. The formal consultation will follow early in 2019 with potential Examination later in 2019.
- b) **Planning casework:** There have only been two planning committee meetings since the last Board Meeting. A further 26 affordable units have given consent in Newtonmore and Boat of Garten, leading to a total of 105 affordable units granted planning permission by the CNPA so far in this financial year. Other notable decisions included refusal of a dry ski slope at Cairngorm Mountain and approval of a number of track and footpath proposals.
- c) **Cairngorms Business Partnership (CBP):** The annual conference was held on 7 November on theme “Inspiring young people to build a future in the National Park” and included a Youth Vision for the National Park from Kingussie High School pupils. The Snow Roads website and app were launched at the conference. The Business Barometer continues to show short-term confidence was well above average in recent years. Medium and long-term business confidence also high. Supplier costs, staff levels and housing availability are a concern as barriers to growth.
- d) **Economic Strategy:** The Board will be asked to approve consultation on a draft Economic Action Plan at today’s meeting, building on the strategy provided by the National Park Partnership Plan.
- e) **Tourism Action Plan:** Action Plan is being delivered across broad range of projects described elsewhere in this paper, all coordinated through Cairngorms Tourism Partnership. The Cairngorms Business Partnership conference in November successfully celebrated the Year of Young People with presentations from young people who developed the Europarc Youth Manifesto and pupils from Kingussie High. Two applications to the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund, Muir of Dinnet and Glenmore, have been successful subject to conditions. These will require considerable input to deliver by Spring 2020.
- f) **Affordable Housing Delivery:** Staff continue to support various projects promoting community-led solutions – at Dulnain Bridge, Boat of Garten and Braemar, with one community currently tendering for a feasibility study and another applying for funding to undertake feasibility work. Additionally Ballater has recently instigated a working groups to look at affordable housing solutions and the TGDT are considering whether they can develop the Old School site in Tomintoul for the same.
- g) **A9 Dualling project:** The details on all sections within the National Park have been published. The CNPA has objected to two sections: first at Killiecrankie where additional survey information is required to assess impacts on the historic battlefield and any design modifications required; and secondly on the Dalraddy to Slochd section where the CNPA considers the provision for non-motorised users between Aviemore and Carrbridge is insufficient. We expect to hear from Transport Scotland on these issues over the coming months.

- h) **Community-led development:** Staff continue to support community led project development throughout the Park. Braemar Castle have been successful in their HLF bid whilst Highland Wildlife Park and Am Fasgagh are still awaiting decisions on their applications. Support has been given to Inverallan20/20 in their LEADER application and the TGDT as they explore new income generation streams. Staff continue to support Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey and the Marr Area Partnership in their CDO roles and supported recent Community Action Planning work in Kingussie. The Association of Cairngorms Communities met in September and Staff and board members attended Scottish Rural Parliament in November.
- i) **Badenoch Great Place Project:** Project is now 8 months in. Liz Henderson has taken over the CNPA project management functions following departure of David Watson in October. Consultants have been appointed to undertake two key pieces of work and both commissions are now underway. RowanTree are leading on an Interpretation & Marketing strategy and are currently undertaking an audit of all cultural and heritage assets in the area. From this they will develop interpretive themes in order to produce a new Marketing Plan for use by the area. Final reports due in Mar 19. STR Tourism Consumer Insights are leading on the development of an Alternative Tourist Route for Badenoch. Ultimately, this seeks to establish the area as an interlinked, strong and compelling heritage destination, with the route becoming a primary reason for visiting the area. Their work to scope out and market test a proposed route will run until Jun 19. Next set of activities to be developed include a website design, familiarisation visits for the business sector, local stories research project and development of an A9 mobile App. Evaluation will be a key element of this scheme as HLF assess its potential for wider roll out. The Project team are involved in HLF led outcomes framework development workshops and evaluation programme delivery. The next Project Board is in early December.
- j) **Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund:** SNH managed fund opening in January 2019 and looking for 10 major projects to be delivered by 2022. Application closing date is April. Staff attended NCHF fund seminar in Oct which confirmed that it is not suitable for a CNPA led project at this point. A couple of Badenoch organisations may consider applying if their recent HLF applications are unsuccessful.

Stakeholder Engagement:

- b) The CEO has spoken at a number of events including the Scottish Mountain Biking Conference, WildScotland AGM, Community Land Scotland Landscape event and the Dark Skys launch at Tomintoul.
- c) There have been a number of evening events including the Board Business Session in Newtonmore attended by around 40 local businesses and community reps. There has also been 3 of the 5 direct election intro evenings held in Grantown, Newtonmore and Ballater.
- d) The CEO has met with Crown Estate Scotland, Atholl Estates, Balavil Estate, Entrepreneurial Scotland, NFUS, new CEO of Highland Council Donna Manson and a joint management team meeting was held with LLTTNPA and LDNPA.

- e) The CEO has also attended groups including EELG, HIE Talent Attraction Group, Cairngorm Funicular Response Group, Marr Area Partnership and CoHI.
- f) A number of staff attended the CBP Conference and staff and the Convener attended the Nature of Scotland Awards where Xander Johnston won the Young Nature Champion award for his work as a Cairngorms Nature Young Ambassador and his volunteering in the Rare Invertebrates Project.

Communications:

- a) **Cairngorms Nature Campaign:**
Planning for the Cairngorms Nature BIG Weekend is well underway with a programme starting to take shape. Contact has been made with the BBC to see what opportunities there are to include BBC Springwatch in the event. Xander Johnston the CN Young Ambassador won the NOSA for Young Nature Champion and has been filmed for Countryfile (TX date 16 December) and has an interview set up with STV.
- b) **Make It Yours Campaign:**
Feedback following MIY presentations is positive and a more detailed learning experience, alongside the one hour presentations, for tourism businesses has been trialled with an outdoor activity provider. The past year will be reviewed and we will consider future opportunities to take forward MIY to different audiences in 2019. CNPA will offer independent LICs (see below) support with CNP information and the opportunity to sell branded merchandise. Visitor Giving options are being prepared to raise funds for conservation and an outdoor access projects in the Park.
- c) **Partner Visitor Information Centres:**
To be known as Local Information Centres (LIC). All signed agreements are in place apart from a location in Newtonmore. Meetings will be arranged in Spring 2019 to bring all LICs together
- d) **Corporate Communications:** The CNPA's Annual Review 2017/18 has been submitted to Ministers and has been published on our website. Bòrd na Gàidhlig have approved the CNPA Gaelic Language Plan 2018-2022 and both the English and Gaelic versions of the Plan will be published on our website by the end of December 2018.
- e) **CNPA Board Elections:** An e-bulletin and press release have already been issued and shared/published widely and 3 of the 5 information events have taken place. An information leaflet has been designed and sent to The Highland Council for printing and distribution to all households along with the formal notice of election (mid-January). A social media campaign to raise awareness and encourage people to stand will start in earnest making use of video content. The CNPA website has a dedicated elections page where people can go for more information and see a timeline.

- f) **EUROPARC Conference 2018:** We are in the process of finalising the conference report and a document including statistics and lessons learnt. The final version will be an interactive online report, similar to the CNAP and should be published by the end of the year.

Organisational Development:

- a) **Office Extension Project:** The extension was formally opened on 16th November, and the opportunity to visit the building was well received by the local community.

Staff have been occupying the new space for 3 months, and we are now commencing the process of reviewing any significant “issues” staff might have working in this space. Staff have been asked to submit their views, together with pragmatic solutions, and this will be discussed at the formal Staff Consultative Forum in December.

We are in the process of writing up a specification for upgraded parts of the old building, which will then go to tender with a view to works being carried out in 2019/20. Plans include two large meeting rooms, a purpose built stationary storage room, a print room, and a staff rest room/sick bay. The old building will also be redecorated next year.

- b) **Staffing update:** Since September, the following recruitment has taken place:
- i. Carrie Marlow joined us on 1st October as Admin Support Officer, on a 2-year fixed term contract.
 - ii. Rebecca Watts joined us on 12th November as Conservation Officer, on a 1-year fixed term contract as maternity cover for Hayley Wiswell.
 - iii. Abi Ball joined us on 1st December as Strategic Routes Development Officer, on an 18-month fixed term contract.
 - iv. Staff still to join us include: - Lucy Ford, Conservation Engagement Officer, joining us on 10th December on a 2-year fixed term contract; Stephanie Wade, Planning Officer on a 2-year fixed term contract and Sarah Henshall, Conservation Officer, both of whom join us on 1st February.
- c) **Youth Employment:** : On-going commitment to supporting Youth Employment, as follows:
- i. Ryan Dziadowiec has returned on a 4-month internship as Gaelic Officer. 3 internships were supported in 2018, with the intention of supporting 2 internships every year going forward.
 - ii. The IT Apprenticeship is progressing very well, both for the apprentice, who is gaining an on-the-job qualification and valuable work experience, and the organisation who is gaining an additional IT resource.

- d) **Organisational Development Strategy 2:** Whilst work and actions within ODS2 is ongoing, we will over the coming months revisit the strategy with a view to identifying emerging focus areas. The completion of the office extension represents one key achievement in our ODS2 delivery. Other key achievements to date include

implementation of the intranet; design and implementation of leave purchase scheme; and implementation of HR policies to underpin promotion of staff volunteering; implementation of our Youth Employment Scheme; and participation in community activities. Looking forward, we are completing work on project management principles and practices and near to final contract with a supplier for a Customer Relationship Management System to better digitise our contact and management information systems.

- e) **Shared Services:** Continued work supporting The Scottish Land Commission HR services, with the current focus being on developing their HR policies and procedures, and engagement processes. We are also supporting the development of the Cairngorms Local Action Group Trust (Cairngorms Trust) in the establishment of their charitable activities, with Nancy Chambers now in post to develop these aspects of the Trust's work beyond its LEADER activities.
- f) **UKNP:** The Director of Corporate Services continues to support the working group in the development of a national charity to complement the work of National Park Partnerships by offering a charitable vehicle through which funding donations may be routed. The UKNP has now approved the submission of the application to establish a charity to the Charities' Regulator, with the application expected to be submitted in late November or early December.
- g) **LEADER:** The Cairngorms Trust has now approved 30 projects in the current LEADER programme, with a LEADER funding commitment of £1.94 million toward total eligible project value of £3.21 million. This total eligible project value does not include a sizeable amount of "in-kind" staffing and other project contributions made by organisations to applicant delivery, and therefore is a very prudent estimate of the value of investment in Community Led Local Development projects in the Cairngorms facilitated by this programme. Of the total investment, £380,000 has been awarded to enterprise development projects with a total value of £968,000. A further £178,000 of LEADER funding has been awarded to support farm diversification projects, which typically involve the creation of new business activities. The relationship with the central government LEADER delivery team is now much improved and all monitoring issues have now been resolved with the Authority's position accepted in all cases. Repayment of LEADER grant awards is also now up to date.

Future Dates for Diary

- a) The Scottish Budget is due to be announced on 12 December 2018.
- b) The next direct elections to the CNPA Board will take place on 21 March 2019.

Grant Moir

December 2018

grantmoir@cairngorms.co.uk

Board Convener Report – For Information

I have decided to produce a very short Board Conveners report to allow the Board to see some of the engagements that I have carried out since our last Board meeting in September. As you can see from the list below, it has been a busy first couple of months as I look to meet as many of our stakeholders as possible. I have also received a number of invitations to speak, including to the Cairngorm Business Partnership (CBP) Conference and I'm trying to accept these invites wherever I can to further promote the work of the CNPA.

As part of my keenness to see us engage with different groups of young people in the Park, I have attended both the Scottish Young Farmer Agri & Rural Affairs Conference and spoke at the 2050 Climate Group Year of Young Peoples Conference. Both have led to positive engagement and will hopefully allow us to engage some harder to reach groups within the Parks younger stakeholders.

We formally welcome our five new ministerial appointees: Douglas McAdam; Anne Rae MacDonald; Dr Fiona McLean; William Munro; Dr Gaener Rodger; as well as our new Moray Council nominee, Cllr. Derek Ross, to their first formal Board meeting. They bring a wide range of experience to the Board and have already made helpful contributions.

Geva Blackett, Murray Fergusson and I met with Mark Tate, Chief Executive of the CBP to discuss the positive CBP trip to China and how we could jointly progress this. We're hoping to grow our relationship with our twinned Geo-Park in China over the coming years. Geva has provided a separate written update on this already.

The other young Cairngorms Xander (Johnston), 12 years old, won the RSPB Young Nature Champion at the Nature of Scotland Awards. This was a new award to mark the YoYP, and it's great to have a young person from the Park recognised in this way. I recommend going online and watching some of his excellent videos!

Janet Hunter and I made the long trip down to Stranraer for the well-attended Scottish Rural Parliament and made a number of useful connections both from within and out with the Park.

I hope this is a useful snapshot and I would welcome any constructive feedback you may have.

Xander McDade,
Board Convener

External Engagements (1st October 2018 – 29th November 2018)

In addition to scheduled Board meetings and internal meetings, I have attended the following external engagements in my capacity as Convener of the Board since our last Board meeting.

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Paper 2 7th December 2018

| | | |
|-----------|---|-------------------------------|
| 02/10/18: | CNPA/Crown Estates Scotland Board | GoS |
| 09/10/18: | Marr Area Partnership 20 th Anniversary AGM | Glenbuchat Hall, Strathdon |
| 18/10/18: | Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland (OATS) AGM, | Battleby |
| 22/10/18: | Convention of the Highlands & Islands | Elgin |
| 30/10/18: | Meeting with Mairi Gougeon MSP, Minister for Rural Affairs & Natural Environment | Edinburgh |
| 02/11/18: | CNPA/CBP meeting with Mark Tate, Geva Blackett and Murray Fergusson | Bruar, Perthshire |
| 07/11/18: | Cairngorm Business Partnership Conference | Aviemore |
| 07/11/18: | Community Engagement Evening | Newtonmore |
| 14/11/18: | Cairngorm Developers Forum | GoS |
| 15/11/18: | Scottish Rural Parliament with Janet Hunter | Stranraer |
| 18/11/18: | Young Farmers Agri & Rural Affairs Conference | Queensferry |
| 21/11/18: | Cairngorms Ranger Summit | Blair Atholl |
| 22/11/18: | Nature of Scotland Awards | Edinburgh |
| 24/11/18: | Panel Discussion, 2050 Climate Group | Perth |
| 26/11/18: | Election Information Evening with Carolyn Caddick | GoS |
| 27/11/18: | Election Information Evening | Newtonmore |
| 29/11/18: | National Parks UK | Pembrokeshire |

Update from Eleanor Mackintosh

Since the last formal Board meeting in September I have attended a Scottish Policy Conference on proposed amendments to the Planning Bill. This event was closely followed by the annual gathering of Planning Convenors from all the Scottish Councils and both National Parks. This is hosted by John McNairney, Chief Planner and attended also by Kevin Stewart the Minister responsible for Planning. Both these events centred around the 345 amendments to the Scottish Planning Bill. The Communities and Local Government Committee at the Scottish Parliament has just completed this stage allowing the Bill to go forward to its Stage 3 hearing in Parliament scheduled for December.

I also attended "Women in Wellies" which was an event aimed at encouraging women to consider the many options available for a career in land management or one of the related industries. This was extremely well attended with busloads of girls from Kingussie, Grantown, Aboyne and Speyside. As well as this group there were quite a few more mature women looking for inspiration from what was being showcased. It was a very fast moving conference which gave all attendees the chance to participate.

The CNPA hold quarterly developer Forums usually held in the Badenoch and Strathspey area but in order to promote the emerging draft Local Development Plan we decided this quarter to hold one in Grantown, which Xander attended, and one in Dinnet which I went along to. Neither attracted a large audience but both were well received by those who did attend and worthwhile conversations were had. Holding future events in Deeside is certainly well worth considering.

The last meeting to mention is the CLOAF (Cairngorm Local Outdoor Access Forum) for

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Paper 2 7th December 2018

which I am the nominated Board representative. Main items were advice on the 'Tread Lightly Campaign 2019', A9 Dualling update & Access Casework update. CLOAF are going to actively recruit new members over the next couple of months. As Eric Baird's term on CLOAF is over he had to step down as Chair so in order to cover the period between now and the next meeting I was nominated Interim Chair. CLOAF thanked Eric for all his hard work and also the other two retiring members Ruaridh Ormiston & Nick Cole.