
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: Point of Entry Marker Project, Phase 3

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Purpose

This paper updates the Board on work undertaken to complete the Point of Entry Marker project which will mark the proposed new boundary of the Cairngorms National Park. Approval is sought in principle to proceed with this final phase of the project.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- a) **Note the work undertaken to date on Phase 3 of Point of Entry Marker Project.**
- b) **Approves, in principle, the final phase of the project and delegates detailed approval of costs to the Finance Committee.**

Executive Summary

The southern boundary of the Cairngorms National Park is scheduled to change in October 2010 creating six new road and one rail entrance to the National Park. This paper summarises work undertaken marking the boundary between 2005 and 2008 and makes proposals to mark the six new road and one railway entrance to the National Park. Outline costs and the potential for partner support are presented, along with options for how to reduce the impact on the CNPA budget.

POINT OF ENTRY MARKER PROJECT, PHASE 3 - FOR DECISION

Background

1. The development of entry point signage was one of the priority actions of the Cairngorms National Park Authority and in 2004 the Board agreed that:

“Entry point markers should be developed, in association with landscaping and other works, to provide a positive experience for people arriving at the Park, encapsulating the area’s essential character and, as far as possible, evoking the Park’s fundamental values of quality, welcome, integrity, respect, protection and progress.”
2. Following detailed development work and the production of cost estimates the Board agreed in September 2005 to:
 - a) Install granite markers at 25 entry points to the Park;
 - b) Upgrade lay-bys and car parks at key sites adjacent to the entry point markers;
 - c) Develop interpretation and visitor information at suitable entry points; and
 - d) Allocate expenditure on Phase I of the Project.
3. In December 2006 the Board approved costs for the Phase 2 – installation of four markers and associated works on the trunk road entrances to the National Park. By August 2007 it had become apparent that the southern boundary of the National Park was likely to change and the Board agreed to delay the installation of a permanent marker on the A9 at Drumochter but to continue support Transport Scotland in upgrading the lay-by at that location.
4. Since September 2005 the following outputs have been achieved:
 - a) Production of 25 Cairngorms National Park entry point granite markers and installation at 24 locations
 - b) Upgrading of three car parks/lay-bys associated with entry points at Dinnet, Huntleys Cave near Grantown and Drumochter.
 - c) Development of a series of panoramic paintings for use in interpretation at the entry points. These paintings have now been used in a much wider range of projects.
5. To date the project has cost some £906,000 with about one third of expenditure coming from partners (see paragraph 14 below).

Implications of the Proposed Boundary Changes

6. Using the experience developed in Phases 1 and 2 proposals have been generated for the new entry points. **Annex 1** shows the proposed boundary changes and **Annex 2** details the new entrances and the recommended works at each site. There are no opportunities at any of these sites to upgrade lay-bys or develop visitor information directly associated with the entry point markers.

7. The Scottish Government timetable for the change in the boundary is by October 2010 and we are aiming to start the installation of key markers as soon after that as is practical. If the recommendations in this paper are approved it should be possible to get all permissions and contracts in place so that there is no need for temporary signage.

Initial Scoping work on Phase 3

8. We have identified six sites for the new markers and have had initial discussions with landowners, roads authorities and communities.
 - a) Land owners/managers of the six new entry point sites
 - b) Perth and Kinross Council (Transport and Streets)
 - c) Perth and Kinross Conservation Trust
 - d) Scottish Natural Heritage
 - e) Transport Scotland
 - f) Blair Atholl Community Council
 - g) Killiecrankie Community Council (scheduled for Feb 2010)
9. As part of this initial scoping we have suggested a priority for each site based on traffic volumes (see Annex 2).
10. Two sites present specific challenges:-
 - a) A9 at Blair Atholl
 - b) A93 at Lair on the road to Glenshee
11. At Blair Atholl (A9) Transport Scotland require detailed plans and a safety audit because of the potential for high speed collisions with the marker. Preparation of these plans is in progress. We are also scoping the potential to subtly illuminate this marker at night using electricity from solar panels.
12. The A93 presents new challenges. The current panel marker at the Cairnwell needs to be relocated some 10 miles south to Lair. However, here the A93 is due to be realigned at some point in the future. Rather than relocate the panel marker to Lair, only for it to be moved yet again we can see advantages in installing a boulder at that site. The panel marker from Cairnwell could be stored until the A93 is upgraded. This would have some disadvantages in terms of presenting a lower profile entry to the Park in the short to medium term but would save a considerable amount of public money. This is our recommended approach at this site and the Board should note that this would leave us with an outstanding cost of some £16,000 for installing the panel marker at some future date.
13. We are continuing to work with Ian White Associates (Landscape Architects) to develop detailed landscape designs and cost estimates for the sites. However, based on previous costs we initially estimate that the total cost of Phase 3 will be in the region of £145,000. Please note that these are desk based estimates subject to change particularly as detailed proposals on A9 have yet to be agreed with Transport Scotland.

Partner Support

14. During Phase 1 and 2 we received financial support from a range of partners:-
- a) European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
 - b) Transport Scotland
 - c) Rees Jeffrey Road Fund
 - d) Highlands and Islands Enterprise
 - e) Scottish Enterprise Grampian
 - f) Moray Council
 - g) Highland Council

However, in the last two years the funding criteria for both ERDF and Scottish Enterprise have changed and we have been informed by both organisations that Phase 3 is not now eligible for support. The project requires no upgrades to facilities on A9 and so is not eligible for Transport Scotland support. We are still in discussion with Perth and Kinross Council about financial support for the project.

Discussion

15. Following designation of CNP the Board recognised that marking the boundary was a key action if we were to raise awareness of the National Park. It is interesting to note that currently 10% of visitors indicate that ‘they **first** became aware that this was a National Park’ by seeing a signpost (Source: interim results to 2009/10 CNP visitor survey). We still consider that first impressions are important and that point of entry signage is a vital tool in creating a ‘sense of place’ for the Cairngorms National Park.
16. Up until spring 2007 there had been no formal proposals to change the boundaries of Cairngorms National Park. At this time the Point of Entry Marker Project was fully developed with partner support and funding in place. Once it became likely that the boundary would change it was prudent to stall work on A9. However, this hiatus and subsequent proposals for boundary change (and the increased number of entry points to the Park) has now left us with a larger project but with no immediate prospect of partner support.
17. We will continue to seek partner funding but the economic downturn and changes in partner’s priorities mean that unless the cost of boundary change is recognised by Scottish Government it is likely that CNPA will bear almost all the costs of Phase 3.
18. Therefore, in order to reduce the impact on other important work, we feel that it is prudent to consider options for either reducing the costs or spreading them over a number of years. In developing these options we have assigned a priority to the marker sites based on the number of people who will pass the site and the potential impact of each site (see **Annex 2**). Table 1 below outlines the options.

Table 1: Options for Delivery of Phase 3 Point of Entry Marker Project

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
1. Install A9 marker in Year 1 and phase the other markers over two or	Costs will be spread over more than one financial year reducing the impact on other	The overall costs will increase if more than one installation contract is let.

more years.	CNPA activity.	If installation at Killiecrankie and Glenshee is delayed too long these communities may feel 'left out'.
2. Do not install the 3 boulders at minor roads.	Costs will be reduced by approx. £25,000	We will be treating one area of CNP differently from all other parts of the Park where all minor road entrances are marked.
3. Install A9 marker in Year 1, Killiecrankie & Glenshee in Year 2 and do not install the 3 boulders at minor roads.	Costs will be spread over more than one financial year and reduced by £25,000	All of the above disadvantages would be relevant

19. The most feasible way of reducing costs is to **not** mark three of the new minor entrances producing an estimated reduction in costs of approximately 17%. However, this would breach previously agreed criteria and our strong commitment to develop a positive sense of arrival across the whole National Park.
20. If the CNP boundary changes, as planned, in October 2010 it is likely that the project will naturally cover two financial years. Deliberately, spreading the work over two or more years will mean letting more than one contract and will increase the overall costs.
21. Therefore, we consider that Option 1 is the best way to progress the project.
22. **It is recommended that the Board:-**
- a) **Note the work undertaken to date on Phase 3 of Point of Entry Marker Project.**
 - b) **Approves, in principle, the final phase of the project and delegates detailed approval of costs to the Finance Committee.**

Next Steps

23. The next steps required to progress the project are:-
- a) Produce detailed designs and cost estimates (preparatory work is underway)
 - b) Continue to seek partner funding support
 - c) Seek advertisement consent for installation of markers
 - d) Safety audit and approval from Transport Scotland for A9 installation
 - e) Seek formal agreement with landowners
 - f) Seek detailed approval to proceed from CNPA Finance Committee and Scottish Government

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Annex 2: Recommended Works at Entry Points created by Proposed CNP Boundary Extension

Location	Approx. Usage	Marker Type	Priority
A9 South of Blair Atholl	7,000 est per day	4.5m Granite Panel Marker (manufactured and in storage)	1
A 93 'Lair' south of Spittal Note the road is due to be realigned in the 'medium term'.	1,100 est per day	Large Granite boulder installed Panel marker at Cairnwell stored Panel marker installed on A93 once realignment is complete	2
B8079 Killiecrankie	2,000 per day (summer)	Large Granite boulder	2
Minor County Road at Killiecrankie	140 per day with large usage by quarry traffic	Granite Boulder	3
Minor County Road at Struan	Not known assumed low level local use	Granite Boulder	3
Minor County Road at Dalnacardoch	Not known assumed low level local use	Granite Boulder	3
Blair Atholl Station	Not known	Metal signs with CNP Brand in colour, in keeping with existing station signage	2