

CAIRNGORMS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM FORUM

- Title:** Review and renewal of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy
- Prepared by:** Murray Ferguson, Head of Visitor Services and Recreation
- Purpose:** To provide background information on process for review of the Strategy and the key role to be played by the Forum.
- Advice Sought:** How do the Forum wish to be involved in the development of the Strategy?

Background

1. In March 2005 The Cairngorms National Park was awarded the Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (hereafter called the Charter) by the EUROPARC Federation, an international organisation representing over 400 members including protected area managers, governmental departments, NGO's and businesses in 36 countries. The Cairngorms National Park was the first National Park in the UK to be awarded the Charter and the award was based on the submission of a Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism (2005-10).
2. The Charter is a practical management tool which helps protected areas to continuously improve the sustainable development and the management of tourism taking account of the needs of the environment, the local population and the local tourism businesses. The Charter is not a typical quality or eco-label but a process-oriented methodology (based on 10 Principles as set out in **Annex I**) that can be used and applied by all kinds of protected areas. The Charter's focus is on initiating and assisting a process of sustainable tourism planning which will lead to sustainable development step by step. The Charter assists this process by providing a 'strategy development kit' which contains principles, a methodology and check-lists for the protected areas to work with. The implementation of the Charter methodology increases the awareness of and support for European protected areas. Further information can be found at www.european-charter.org/home/

3. Preparation of the Strategy, which was assisted by considerable input from the National Park's Tourism Development Working Group and then the ViSIT Forum, pre-dated the first National Park Plan and assisted with the development of a number of early practical initiatives. When the National Park Plan was developed the main themes from the Strategy were incorporated into the relevant Strategic Objectives and Priorities for Action.
4. An informal review of progress in implementing the Strategy was undertaken in 2008 and was reported to the CNPA Board and partners. The review report was generally positive, noting "...The overall conclusion from the review is that CNPA and its partners have made very good progress on the development and management of sustainable tourism in the Cairngorms. We are impressed with what has been achieved." A further report of actions to address the key issues raised in the Review was taken to the CNPA Board in January 2009.
5. Although a re-application for the Charter was technically required in March 2010, the CNPA Board decided to request from Europarc a one year delay in renewal of the Strategy to allow the results of the 2009/10 visitor survey to be considered and to reduce the gap in timescales between the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and the National Park Plan from two years to one. This extension was duly granted and plans are in place to renew the Strategy.

Plans for review and renewal of the Strategy

6. CNPA has very recently commissioned the Tourism Company to review and renew the Strategy along the following lines.

Aim:

- a) To produce a redeveloped Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan for the Cairngorms National Park Authority based upon the Europarc European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas guidance.

Objectives:

- a) To develop a strategy that is visionary and progressive in style, and which builds on the economic, social and environmental benefits of taking a sustainable approach to tourism
- b) To identify areas of success and challenges faced by the first Action Plan
- c) To identify a further five-year programme of actions relating to sustainable tourism development, including the identification of key and/or lead partners and funding opportunities where appropriate.
- d) To ensure that all interested parties in tourism are involved in the development of the strategy and action plan.

- e) To develop a process for target setting and a monitoring for the strategy.
7. In addition, it has been specified that the Tourism Company will be required to work closely with the consultants working on behalf of the Cairngorms Business Partnership who are developing a Marketing Framework and Action Plan, and consult with all relevant parties with an interest in tourism (public, private and third sector). Also, the new Strategy should anticipate the expanded National Park boundary (taking in Blair Atholl and Glenshee) that is due to be in place in October 2010 and any consultation should fully involve partners in that area.
8. Looking to the future, discussions have already commenced about the next National Park Plan. The intention at this stage is to structure development of the Plan into three broad themes of “sustainable land use”, “sustainable communities” and “a sustainable destination”, that collectively address the range of issues that stakeholders identify with and also reflect the way that delivery partners address those issues. We would expect that there would be a very good fit between the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and the “sustainable destination” section of the Park Plan.

Involvement of the Sustainable Tourism Forum

9. The Tourism Company is expecting to work closely with the Sustainable Tourism Forum (STF). This is especially important at the Charter requires that “...a permanent forum, or equivalent arrangement, should be established between the protected area authority, local municipalities, conservation and community organisations and representatives of the tourism industry. Links with regional and national bodies should be developed and maintained.” The Forum should also play a central role in overseeing the implementation of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan.
10. The consultants have proposed to work in the following key stages. Areas of potential input from the Sustainable Tourism Forum are suggested in the right hand column.

Stage in process	Progress and plans	Potential role for STF
1. Inception meeting	Now complete	-
2. Assimilate background information	Ongoing at present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input from May STF meeting • Members should bring any relevant background information to

Stage in process	Progress and plans	Potential role for STF
		attention of the consultants
3. Consultation with key partners	May 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation conversations with members of STF
4. Survey of enterprises	To commence late May	-
5. Update audit and prepare issues report	May - June	-
6. Stakeholder workshop 1	Early to mid-June (to coincide with marketing workshop)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invitation to all STF members to the event
7. Preparation of Draft Strategy and Action Plan	August 2010	-
8. Stakeholder workshop 2	September 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invitation to all members to the event
9. Further round of targeted consultation	October 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting of STF
10. Circulate final draft and incorporate amendments	November 2010	-
11. Post-receipt of final report and in advance of tasking the Strategy to the CNPA Board for approval	December 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting of STF

11. Advice is sought from the Forum about how they wish to be involved in the development of the Strategy.

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Annex I: The Charter Principles for Sustainable Tourism

Working in Partnership

Principle 1: To involve all those implicated by tourism in and around the protected area in its development and management.

A permanent forum, or equivalent arrangement, should be established between the protected area authority, local municipalities, conservation and community organisations and representatives of the tourism industry. Links with regional and national bodies should be developed and maintained.

Preparing and implementing a strategy

Principle 2: To prepare and implement a sustainable tourism strategy and action plan for the protected area.

The strategy should be based on careful consultation and be approved and understood by local stakeholders. It should contain:

- A definition of the area to be influenced by the strategy, which may extend outside the protected area
- An assessment of the area's natural, historic and cultural heritage, tourism infrastructure, and economic and social circumstances; considering issues of capacity, need and potential opportunity
- An assessment of current visitors and potential future markets
- A set of strategic objectives for the development and management of tourism, covering:
 - conservation and enhancement of the environment and heritage;
 - economic and social development;
 - preservation and improvement of the quality of life of local residents;
 - visitor management and enhancement of the quality of tourism offered.
- An action plan to meet these objectives
- An indication of resources and partners to implement the strategy
- Proposals for monitoring results

Addressing key issues

Each protected area is different. Strategic priorities and action programmes should be determined locally, using the approach described above. However, the following key issues should be addressed:

Principle 3: To protect and enhance the area's natural and cultural heritage, for and through tourism, and to protect it from excessive tourism development by:

- monitoring impact on flora and fauna and controlling tourism in sensitive locations
- encouraging activities, including tourism uses, which support the maintenance of historic heritage, culture and traditions
- controlling and reducing activities, including tourism impacts, which: adversely affect the quality of landscapes, air and water; use non-renewable energy; and create unnecessary waste and noise
- encouraging visitors and the tourism industry to contribute to conservation

Principle 4: To provide all visitors with a high quality experience in all aspects of their visit, by:

- researching the expectations and satisfaction of existing and potential visitors
- meeting the special needs of disadvantaged visitors
- supporting initiatives to check and improve the quality of facilities and services

Principle 5: To communicate effectively to visitors about the special qualities of the area, by:

- ensuring that the promotion of the area is based on authentic images, and is sensitive to needs and capacity at different times and in different locations
- providing readily available and good quality visitor information in and around the area, and assisting tourism enterprises to do so
- providing educational facilities and services that interpret the area's environment and heritage to visitors and local people, including groups and schools

Principle 6: To encourage specific tourism products which enable discovery and understanding of the area, by:

- providing and supporting activities, events and packages involving the interpretation of nature and heritage

Principle 7: To increase knowledge of the protected area and sustainability issues amongst all those involved in tourism, by:

- providing or supporting training programmes for staff of the protected area, other organisations and tourism enterprises, based on assessing training needs

Principle 8: To ensure that tourism supports and does not reduce the quality of life of local residents, by:

- involving local communities in the planning of tourism in the area
- ensuring good communication between the protected area, local people and visitors
- identifying and seeking to reduce any conflicts that may arise

Principle 9: To increase benefits from tourism to the local economy, by:

- promoting the purchase of local products (food, crafts, local services) by visitors and local tourism businesses
- encouraging the employment of local people in tourism

Principle 10: To monitor and influence visitor flows to reduce negative impacts, by:

- keeping a record of visitor numbers over time and space, including feedback from local tourism enterprises
- creating and implementing a visitor management plan
- promoting use of public transport, cycling and walking as an alternative to private cars
- controlling the siting and style of any new tourism development

Source: European Charter website, www.european-charter.org/home/, May 2010