
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: Joint Working with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority

Prepared by: David Cameron, Head of Corporate Services

Purpose

To consider outline proposals for future joint working between the Cairngorms and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authorities.

Recommendations

The Board is requested to:

- a) Approve the outline plan of joint activity with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority (as summarised in Annex 1 to the paper)
- b) Approve the principles underpinning the joint working initiative:
 - i. Development in areas of policy or service provision where National Park Authorities can help each other to mutual advantage;
 - ii. Development of more robust services, better able to withstand fluctuations in workloads and staffing;
 - iii. Consistency in approach where this makes sense, with local variation whenever circumstances require;
 - iv. The joint development and agreement of policy in specific areas gives the potential to establish a louder voice on core National Park messages.
 - v. Each National Park must retain its own identity and culture;
 - vi. There are no plans for mergers of organisations or for integration into single service structures.
- c) Agree that a Memorandum of Understanding, or some alternate form of partnership agreement, should be drawn up to underpin the agreed programme of activity and principles for joint working, and that the agreement of this document should be delegated to the Finance Committee.

Executive Summary

The Cairngorms National Park Authority has responded to a request from Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority to provide support

on corporate services provision and organisational development over the past 10 months. This work has highlighted that there may be mutual benefit to be gained in National Park Authorities working more closely together. During the same period, the Scottish Government's has undertaken a scheduled 5-year Strategic Review of National Parks in Scotland. Among the recommendations made in the strategic review are that:

- a) The scope for wider sharing of corporate services and increased harmonisation of employer arrangements between National Park Authorities should be examined.
- b) The NPAs should jointly agree the scope and direction of service sharing and establish a plan and timetable for the work required.

This paper seeks to follow up both the work done with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority to date and the strategic review recommendations, by setting out the rationale and principles for continuation of joint working and proposing a programme of activity that may be undertaken.

The key principles underpinning the joint work are that areas of development should be those that are of mutual advantage to both Authorities; that each National Park must retain its own identity and culture; and that there are no plans for mergers of organisations or for integration into single service structures.

Potential activities that may be covered by joint working cover three general areas:

- a) A project around the development of more robust, harmonised human resources and employer arrangements.
 - b) A project of work around other areas of corporate services activities.
 - c) A number of potentially linked but discrete projects on joint policy development and other communications initiatives
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JOINT WORKING WITH LOCH LOMOND AND THE TROSSACHS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY - FOR DECISION

Background

1. Since formation of the two Scottish National Parks, both National Park Authorities have sought to liaise, on a relatively informal and ad hoc basis, on the delivery of the National Park aims in their respective areas. Both Authorities work with the same Scottish Government sponsor team and this has also promoted joint discussions on some issues.
2. Over the course of the last 10 months, the Authority's Head of Corporate Services has been providing advice and support on corporate services and organisational development to the new Chief Executive of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA), and to the LLTNPA Board and Management Team. This support was provided by CNPA in response to a request for assistance from LLTNPA. Provision of this support has revealed that there may be mutual benefit to be gained in working more closely.
3. During the same period, the Scottish Government's has undertaken a scheduled 5-year Strategic Review of National Parks in Scotland. Recommendations for this review have recently been put out to public consultation and an announcement is due in the near future. Two recommendations in the strategic review relevant to the development of joint working between the Authorities are that:
 - a) The scope for wider sharing of corporate services and increased harmonisation of employer arrangements between National Park Authorities should be examined.
 - b) The NPAs should jointly agree the scope and direction of service sharing and establish a plan and timetable for the work required.
4. A paper to the Board in January 2009 highlighted that a group of senior officers from both NPAs were jointly considering these recommendations and the potential for future development of existing service sharing arrangements, and indicated that a subsequent paper would be submitted to Board by late Spring.
5. This paper now sets out the proposals for future development of joint working with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs NPA to the Board for consideration.

Rationale for Joint Working between National Park Authorities

6. It is important at the outset to emphasise that there are no plans for mergers of organisations, integration to a single corporate services

structure, nor will there be a loss of jobs from this joint working initiative. Also, both NPAs will not be expected to do everything together.

7. National Park Authorities are among the smallest of NDPBs. The Strategic Review reported on the initial results of a corporate services cost benchmark exercise, which found that NPAs proportionately spend less than others on their "employer arrangements". The review felt, therefore, there was a risk that significant change to employer arrangements from large scale and sudden structural change could result in costs of change outweighing the benefits. Given this situation, it is very unlikely that the development of joint arrangements with LLTNPA will deliver either organisation significant efficiency cost savings, particularly in the short term. Some small efficiency savings have been identified and, over time, development of joint working arrangements may identify new opportunities for cost savings, but these are unlikely to be large.
8. Rather, the rationale for developing joint working arrangements is focused on the development of more responsive and "robust" services, where delivery of corporate support and organisational development initiatives undertaken by two relatively small Authorities are better able to withstand fluctuations in workloads and staffing. Currently, we can suffer from an inability to provide service cover within limited staff resources, particularly at times of staff absence or turnover, and when external initiatives such as SEARS bear down on our organisations. Therefore, there is a potential to realise greater service effectiveness in the short-term.
9. Furthermore, there are many issues which both NPAs have to deal with and on which we can help each other to mutual advantage. There may be areas of policy development and research where it makes sense for both NPAs to explore whether there are similarities in requirements. This could allow policy development and research, or at least a part of it, to be undertaken once on behalf of both National Parks. Crucially, any developments in this respect will be limited by the recognition that both National Parks are different, with many different pressures. Each National Park must retain its own identity and culture.
10. This approach also affords the potential for more effective (and efficient) policy development work, with consistency in approach within both Scotland's National Parks where this consistency makes sense, and local variation where circumstances require.
11. In terms of the profile of National Parks within Scotland, joint working, and the joint development and agreement of policy in specific areas, gives the potential to establish a louder voice on core National Park messages.

12. In summary, therefore, the rationale for continuation and further development of the joint working initiative with LLTNPA is one of establishing mutual benefit.

Proposed Programme of Activity

13. The early stages of this joint working activity have illustrated the benefits of sharing certain staff resources. As two relatively small organisations, the Authorities have been able to respond dynamically to their changing needs. Cairngorms NPA has provided support to Loch Lomond and the Trossachs while the new Chief Executive at Loch Lomond has implemented a revised management team and organisational structure. Appointment to a new post of Human Resources Manager at Loch Lomond and the Trossachs in March 2009 will begin to provide an enhanced HR service, where in due course HR staff in Balloch and Grantown could be available to support staff from either National Park Authority.
14. A potential range of joint working activity over the next 2 to 3 years has been drawn up. The potential activities cover three general areas:
 - a) A project around the development of more robust, harmonised human resources and employer arrangements.
 - b) A project of work around other areas of corporate services activities.
 - c) A number of potentially linked but discrete projects on joint policy development and other communications initiatives.
15. More detail on the potential aspects of joint activity is set out in Annex 1 to this paper. The Annex sets out indicative start and completion times for many of these areas of activity. If approved by the Boards of both Authorities, this outline plan will be used as the basis for developing more detailed project delivery plans and the feasibility of indicative start and completion dates will be reassessed on that more detailed basis.
16. A key point in considering the potential range of activities is that there is no assumption that the correct response in all areas listed will be to develop a joint response by NPAs. These items are listed as potential areas for collaboration only, and in each case we have to test whether any element of joint working is likely to prove the most economic, effective and/or efficient response. In some cases, it may be more appropriate to develop independent solutions, or to develop other partnerships.

Programme Management Arrangements

17. The CNPA Head of Corporate Services will take overall responsibility for managing the delivery of the agreed Joint Working Programme.
18. A Programme Monitoring Group, comprising the Chief Executives of both National Parks, the CNPA Head of Corporate Services and LLTNPA Senior Manager – Business Services will be established and will consider updates on project delivery at least quarterly. The reviews will be on the basis of the programme of activities agreed by both Authorities.
19. Both organisations will also continue to make use of appropriate Board reporting structures. The overall progress of the activity, if approved, will be reflected in the CNPA's existing Corporate and Operational Plan monitoring reports.
20. The Authority will also continue to make use of existing Committee structures where appropriate. For example, the Staffing and Recruitment Committee will be engaged with any developments on employer arrangements or corporate services delivery that may impact on the Cairngorms NPA and its staff.
21. The Authority will also continue to make appropriate use of internal staff consultative structures in progressing any joint working initiatives. In particular, we will make full use of the Staff Consultative Forum to seek staff views on planned developments.
22. Similarly, LLTNPA will continue to make use of its own internal governance and activity monitoring processes.

Governance and Financial Arrangements

23. Following consideration of the potential joint working arrangements by both Authorities, it is proposed that a Memorandum of Understanding or some alternate form of partnership agreement should be drawn up and agreed by both NPAs to underpin any longer-term plans and secure long-term commitment to project objectives by both organisations.
24. For clarity, this agreement should include details of the financial arrangements for joint working. As a minimum, I expect the agreement should quantify the level of resource to be put into the partnership by both Authorities, monitoring arrangements, thresholds below which cost recovery will not be pursued, and the means by which any cost sharing will be dealt with.
25. The detail of the agreement will be drawn up following approval of a programme of joint work by both Authorities. I recommend that for

Cairngorms NPA the approval of a Memorandum of Understanding governing the project should be delegated by the Board to the Finance Committee.

Next Steps

26. At the time of writing, the Scottish Government has yet to report on the outcome of its consultation on the recommendations arising from the Strategic Review of National Parks. The outcome of the consultation and Scottish Government's decisions on the recommendations made may have an impact on the required scope and / or timetable of any joint working activities between NPAs. The programme plan will be reviewed accordingly when the final decisions on the Strategic review recommendations are known. Any significant variations required to plans currently presented will be reported back to the Board.
27. Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority's Board will consider these proposals at its meeting in June 2009.
28. Subject to agreement of both Authorities to the proposals, officers will draw up a draft Memorandum of Understanding to support the project delivery.

Financial Implications

29. Over the course of the last 10 months, the CNPA has contributed the equivalent of 20% of the Head of Corporate Services time to support LLTNPA and consider the development of joint working activities. This time represents an opportunity cost to the organisation. Any additional cash costs arising from this arrangement have been met by LLTNPA.
30. In developing longer term working arrangements, we will be aiming to achieve a balanced pattern of resource inputs from both NPAs. We will also seek to ensure as far as possible that the outputs from the programme of activity will benefit both NPAs in a similarly balanced way. Both resource inputs and programme outputs will be monitored through arrangements to be agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding.
31. While it is noted earlier in this paper that the realisation of efficiency savings is not one of the primary drivers of this activity, it may be possible that the activities contribute to the NPAs efficiency delivery plans. Both NPAs are required to meet Scottish Government targets for achieving 2% efficiency savings per annum and service changes realised through joint working initiatives may make a contribution to

these efficiency savings over time. The Authority's Finance Committee will be kept apprised of developments in this area.

Presentational Implications

32. One of the significant potential benefits of the further development of joint working between NPAs relates to the potential development of core messages on Scotland's National Parks, and the potential for the joint presentation of these key messages to have a greater impact than may be possible by both NPAs working separately.
33. The development of joint working also addresses two of the main recommendations to arise from the Strategic Review of National Parks, while being in line with current Scottish Government and wider public sector policy of public bodies seeking to establish more efficient and effective services through shared services or closer collaboration where appropriate.
34. Senior Officers of LLTNPA have been consulted in the development of this paper.

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30 April 2009

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ANNEX 1: DRAFT PROGRAMME PLAN

Start by	Complete by	Joint Working between Cairngorms and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authorities: Potential Activities
		HR Services and Harmonising Employer Arrangements
01/01/09	31/05/09	Appoint HR staff within collaborative working model
01/02/09	31/05/09	Establish a prioritised schedule of HR policies for review and gradual harmonisation between NPAs
01/05/09		Initiate delivery of joint HR service delivery
01/05/09		Initiate review and implementation of revised HR policies and procedures
01/06/09	30/11/09	Review Snowdrop HR system utilisation and consider joint service development plans
01/08/09	30/09/09	Review CNPA and LLTT terms and conditions and consider potential harmonisation plan
01/01/10	31/03/10	Review current job evaluation schemes and drawn up specification for replacement
01/01/10	31/03/10	Review current salary structures and draw up proposals for replacement
01/04/10	30/09/10	Develop and consult of revisions to job evaluation scheme
01/04/10	30/09/10	Develop and consult on revisions to salary structures
01/10/10	31/12/10	Develop and consult on 2011/12 Pay Remits, to provide for implementation of new job evaluation scheme and salary structures
01/10/10	31/03/11	Plan for and implement longer term HR staffing arrangements
01/04/11	30/09/11	Implement job evaluation and salary structure revisions within both NPAs
01/10/11	31/12/11	Single pay remit: develop for 2012/13 financial year. ¹
	31/03/11	Finalise consolidated staff handbook
01/01/10	30/06/10	Complete skills mapping of NPA staff and implementation of shared in-house professional advice
		Other Potential Corporate Services Joint Working Arrangements Identified
01/03/09	30/06/09	Develop consistent approaches to Strategic Risk Management
01/04/09	30/06/09	Option Appraisal for jointly securing competent advice on Health and Safety
01/05/09	31/06/09	Access advice on financial / tax implications of

¹ Potential single pay remit is dependent on both alignment of job evaluation and salary systems, and also on potential to accommodate any variation in local terms and conditions within a single remit.

Start by	Complete by	Joint Working between Cairngorms and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authorities: Potential Activities
		"shared service" developments
01/05/09	30/06/09	Agree Memorandum of Understanding between both NPAs
01/05/09	30/06/09	Develop consistent annual report / core NPA messages on NPA contribution to National Outcomes in 2008/09
01/05/09	31/07/09	Liaison on consistent closure of 2008/09 financial accounts
01/05/09	30/09/09	Develop Business Continuity Plans for each NPA
01/05/09	30/09/09	Develop a "linked" NPAs performance management framework for reporting on SG outcomes, for 2009/10 reporting
01/08/09		Collaboration on development and implementation of equalities schemes and action plans
01/08/09	31/10/09	Develop and implement staff survey
01/08/09	30/11/09	Feasibility study on collaboration on Freedom of Information and Complaints procedures
01/08/09	31/12/09	Review finance systems; draw up specification for new system; undertake option appraisal for joint development
01/08/09	31/12/09	Review potential for collaboration in provision of financial management services
01/09/09	31/03/10	Undertake joint procurement of legal services contract
01/01/10	31/03/10	Feasibility study on provision of assets and facilities management
01/01/10	30/06/10	Undertake option appraisal of potential IT and GIS service collaboration within NPAs and between NPAs and partners
01/08/10	31/12/10	Potential implementation of new finance system for both NPAs
01/10/10	31/03/11	Undertake joint procurement of internal audit service contract
01/08/12	31/10/12	Develop and implement staff survey – to follow up 2009 survey
		Other Joint Working Initiatives / Projects
		Review feasibility / joint benefit to be gained from common approaches to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint NP approach to political and parliamentary intelligence gathering • Joint NP communications / messages about National Parks and on the contribution to SG Outcomes

Start by	Complete by	Joint Working between Cairngorms and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authorities: Potential Activities
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint NP partnership / stakeholder development
		Review feasibility / joint benefit to be gained from common approaches to strategic policy in key areas. Possibilities include SRDP, Planning and development management, policies on renewables, delivery and monitoring of National Park Plans, climate change – National Parks as models of sustainability.