

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: ADVISORY GROUPS – DISCUSSION PAPER

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Purpose

To offer for discussion a proposed network of groups as successors to the Forums and Peer Groups of the Cairngorms Partnership, to advise and assist the Board in developing and implementing policy. A paper for decision will be brought forward at a later meeting.

Recommendations

That members consider the attached proposals, offer comments at the meeting, or subsequently to the Convener, Deputy Convener or Interim Chief Executive, to allow firm proposals to be put to the Board for decision at a later meeting.

ADVISORY GROUPS – DISCUSSION PAPER

Introduction

1. The role of the board is to set the strategic direction of the CNPA, and the framework within which staff will take work forward (not necessarily on their own, but generally working in partnership with staff in other organisations). The Board will want to ensure that it is a “listening” organisation. Delivering the aims and purpose of the Park, which eventually will be encapsulated in the National Park Plan, will depend on effective communication with the users and residents of the Park, as well as good technical and scientific information where appropriate. In other words, good sources of opinion and advice will be needed.
2. The proposed staffing structure for the CNPA (set out in paper 2) proposes 7 groups:
 - Corporate services
 - Communications
 - Planning and Development Control
 - *Natural Resources* (Aims 1 and 2)
 - *Recreation & Visitor Services* (Aim3)
 - *Business and Communities* (including cultural heritage) (Aims 4 and 1)
 - Strategic Policy and Programme Management (National Park Plan, research and projects programme)
3. Three of the policy groups, shown in italics, are based on the four aims of the National Park. I acknowledge the importance of not allowing these groupings to lead to a “silo” mentality, and recognise the need to achieve an integrated approach to the aims; that will be addressed through working practices and culture. This arrangement of staff resources nevertheless provides a useful framework for also thinking about the advisory and other groups. The existing forums, project and other groups, from which the Board received briefings in May and June, are shown in Annex 1 grouped under these “group” headings which are used in the staff structure.

Advisory Groups

4. The forums and peer groups established by the Cairngorms Partnership have proved a useful mechanism for engaging with stakeholders, providing a forum for resolution of different views, and generating ideas. It seems sensible to build on these existing groups. However, the role of the CNPA is subtly different from that of the Cairngorms Partnership. The CNPA is required, in the main through the National Park Plan, to ensure a coordinated and collective approach to the Park’s aims. It has a statutory duty to deliver a Park Plan, as well having a development control function and being the access authority for the area. It is implicit that the CNPA takes a lead in developing policy and ensuring its implementation (although this is likely to be largely through others). In doing so, the CNPA will need to establish good two way communications with others to ensure its policy development is well informed. In keeping with this, the CNP is required to establish advisory groups.

5. This paper therefore proposes, for further discussion, that the existing forums are essentially retained but in modified form as shown in Annex 2, and take on the role of advisory groups (under the terms of section 20 of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000). A number of points need to be made by way of explanation:
- a) The three land management-related forums (Agriculture, SLF Liaison and Moorland) have been put together into one advisory group. It is a moot point whether the Rivers Forum could also be included. On balance I felt that the expertise and the issues were sufficiently different to warrant a separate advisory group.
 - b) As the Access authority, the CNPA is required to set up one or more Access Forums under the terms of the Land Reform Act. This will be for the specific purposes under that Act. I suggest therefore that there may still be a need for a separate Recreation Forum, but with a membership that reflects providers and users.
 - c) An advisory group on communities will be needed, but this is not necessarily the CCCG, if this is to remain as a semi-autonomous group (see below). I propose that a Communities Advisory Group should also encompass youth issues.
 - d) An advisory group on cultural heritage is needed; there is currently no provision for advice on this important element of our first aim.
 - e) While tourism is not the sum total of business activity in the Park, it is arguably the most important and complex, and a sector in which the Park Board potentially has an important coordination and enabling role.
6. In view of the clear role as advisory groups, I propose that the CNPA will provide the secretariat, will agree membership, will probably chair the groups, and will provide travel expenses to members (unless from other public bodies).

Working Groups

7. I propose that number of working groups are also established, very similar to Advisory Groups, but focusing more on specific tasks or projects. Some of these already exist in the form of project groups. Others may arise as particular projects emerge – taking forward the development of a local produce marketing initiative is offered as one example. I also suggest that given the importance of communications in a Park this size, there may be merit in setting up a group to help generate ideas early in the life of the Park on this issue. Such working/project groups would have limited life, and would be disbanded as the project/task reached a suitable point. Members would receive travel expenses (unless already working for other public bodies). The Chair may or may not be a Board Member.

Other Groups

8. Finally, there are groups which are semi autonomous, fulfilling a useful function in terms of furthering the Park's aims, but which the Board would not need or wish to be closely involved in. In such cases, such as the Community Councils Group, and the Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce (which has not been entirely funded by the CPS, but has received a contribution), it might be appropriate for the CNPA to offer funding to the group in question as a way of helping with its administration.

9. For information, Annex 3 shows all the staffing groups, advisory groups, working groups and committees, under the same core headings. This suggests an obvious gap in terms of needing a group to assist in the development of the National Park Plan. The table at Annex 3 leaves open for discussion the matter of individual member responsibilities, something which the Board may like to consider further in this context.

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EXISTING GROUPS/FORUMS

	Natural Resources	Recreation and Visitor Services	Business and Communities and Culture
Forums	Rivers Agriculture SLF Liaison Moorland	Recreation Paths Task Force	CCCG (Community Councils Group) Housing Tourism
Project	LBAP Forest of Spey Steering Group		Affordable Health LAG (Local Action Group for LEADER+)
Other Groups	Deer Management	Rangers	Youth All Abilities

PROPOSED STRUCTURE FOR CNPA ADVISORY GROUPS

	Natural Resources	Recreation and Visitor Services	Business and Communities and Culture
Advisory Groups	Rivers Land Management	Access Forum [Recreation Forum?]	Communities (& youth) (Could be CCCG) Tourism [Cultural Heritage?]
Working Groups & Project Groups	[Food Marketing?] LBAP Moorlands Project	Rangers [Communications]	Housing LAG [All Abilities] Health & Fitness for All
Semi Autonomous Groups – supported			CCCG Chamber of Commerce Others?

Advisory Groups:

- Advise CNPA on development and implementation of policy
- Supported by CNPA secretariat
- Travel expenses (except for public agencies)
- Member(s) of CNPA on group
- Chaired (generally) by CNPA

Working Groups:

- Advise CNPA on specific issues and projects – time limited
- Generally supported by CNPA secretariat
- Travel expenses except for public agencies
- Chair – agreed by group

Additional Groups:

- Groups which are semi-autonomous, but supported by a grant from CNPA because of benefits to Park.

POSSIBLE ORGANISATION: STAFF/BOARD COMMITTEES/ADVISORY GROUPS

Staff – Teams	<i>Corporate Services</i>	<i>Communications</i>	<i>Planning & Development Control</i>	<i>NP Plan</i>	<i>Natural Resources</i>	<i>Visitor Surveys & Recreation</i>	<i>Business & Communities (& Cultural Heritage)</i>
Advisory Groups					Rivers Land Management	Access	Communities Tourism Cultural Heritage
Committees	Audit Finance Recruit.		Planning Call-in Group				
Working Groups & Project Groups		<i>Communications ?</i>			Food Marketing? LBAP Moorlands	Rangers <i>Communications ?</i>	Housing LAG [LEADER+] Youth Comm. All Abilities H & Fitness
Issues & Indiv. Member Responsibilities							