

## Cairngorms Campaign Seminar: Defining the future direction 30/10/04

Prior to the AGM of October 2004, members of the Campaign held a seminar on what they felt should be the future of the Cairngorms, to help give the efforts of the campaign direction. Below is the result of the seminar. Note that these results are simply the preliminary reactions of members and need further research to confirm the extent to which the concerns and statements are fully justified.

### Session 1: What is the current situation within the Cairngorm Area, the state of the resource and trends?

#### Woodlands and forestry

- Degradation of native woodland continues
- Mature forests – little influence on forestry policy and management within CNPA
- Some good changes: exemplars Mar & Abernethy
- CC needs to review status across area and inform others and members

#### Local Carrying Capacity

- Insufficient action and direction from National Park Board -to fulfil the natural and cultural heritage objectives of the CNPA
- Windfarms-: significant potential adverse impact for little contribution to national energy demand
- Water Abstraction-: Glen & Loch Einich – needs clarity on current situation.
- Housing development threatens natural resource base – lack of policy
- Run-of-the-river hydroschemes can be locally damaging – lack of clear information of local impact IRENNAN WHAT IS A 'RUN OF HYDROSCHMES'?
- Alcan abstraction impacting whole Spey catchment from generation for electricity – not aluminium smelting – taking advantage of current subsidised electricity price. Need to limit abstraction
- Local carrying capacity being exceeded in terms of drinking water provision, sewerage and local green space

#### Planning and National Park Authority

- The present planning arrangements are failing the stated objectives of the National Park
- Lack of international (and national) involvement in the consultation processes adopted by the NPA.
- Inaccurate information published by the National Park Authority
- National Park Board
  - Supports funicular!
  - Pro-development irrespective of status of natural heritage
  - Emphasis on economic and social development apparently at the expense of other (natural heritage) objectives
- Over development of mechanised recreational development at the expense of the environment
- Lack of unified NP Ranger Service
- Dispute over Park Boundaries

- Need to lobby minister (just changed to Lewis MacDonald so fresh opportunity)
- Wrong – inconsistent boundaries. Unsatisfactory for the protection and management of the core area of the national park (my aside - core area not defined, but assumed!!)
- Increase use of petition system in Scottish Parliament
- Bring case for private members bill
- Over provision of housing (second homes & holiday accommodation)
- Lack of discipline and overspend on offices

### Funicular

- Wider ski area untidy and littered with skiing debris
- Is Funicular an d Cairngorm Mountain Limited Company illegally allowed to trade- whilst insolvent. (Note:- It was later clarified this was not the case) DRENNAN BE CAREFUL HERE – WE NEED TO BE SURE THAT THIS IS FACT – WE COULD BE ON STICKY GROUND IF THIS IS NOT FACT. – EVEN THOUGH IT WAS SAID AT A AGM, THE MOMENT IT GOES INTO PRINT AND THE PUBLIC DOMAIN, THEN THE DIRECTORS OF THE CAMPAIGN ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACCURACY OR INACCURACY OF THE STATEMENT
- It was thought t Total subsidy and state support exceeded by further £5 million – this needs to be clarified and if so, questions need to be posed to public accounts & audit commission  
AGAIN SAME POINT S ABOVE

### Archaeology

- Represents past activity and roots of the culture
- Not featured in plans and policies

### Sporting Estates and Access

- Large expansion of land rover tracks & increasing devastation in widening existing tracks – recognition that a lot of money has been spent on this and not on conservation management of estates
- Quad bikes & off- roading both by estates and informally is threat to integrity of area and disturbs wild-life and other recreational users (Came to our my notice that in September 2004 more than 20 motor trail bikers went through Corrie Yarrich and spent night at Laggan Pottery Bunkhouse!)
- Mountain bikers should be required to fit and use bells when approaching walkers from behind!
- Shooting/stalking is actively an adverse influence on access. Sport shooting needs to be licensed and reformed to be more effective in terms of deer management, especially as it so seldom contributes to estate and community economic well-being.
- State of resource: southern and Deeside area is better than northern area – yet outwith National Park Boundary. Contrast Rothiemurchu as forestry proposals (seen as move to muscle subsidy out of system) with NTS management plans. Glen–Feshie poor state of management is seen as “sad” and indictment of past decision maker sthat the land was not taken into conservation management (irrelevant whether state or NGO).

- Stalking is highly developed with high environmental impact with tracks and concentration on stags and access tracks – imperative to move to lower impact “hunting” approach and organised cull.
- **Deer Commission**
  - to be applauded on exercising powers – need to manage PR.
  - Need to set standards for cull & techniques
  - Stag (deer) numbers need to be decoupled from estate capital value of land



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## Session 2 : What the Cairngorms should be like in 20 years?

### **Standards of Management**

- World Heritage Status for natural heritage interest.
- Very competent and comprehensive National Park Plan and planning process that conforms to international standards, EU legislation: with the Cairngorms Campaign scrutinising and contributing to the process.
- National Park has achieved international recognition for the quality of its conservation management.
- Restored Cairn Gorm with ski area within the European sites
- Moved to effective zoning (IUCN category II?) within a comprehensive land use planning system (compared with current development control process). “National Park should be able to lead the way”.
- The National Park has established wildland areas and is managing them to established best practice guidelines.
- Park boundaries to be coherent based on natural criteria not political criteria
- Planning powers to be granted to CNPA

### **Forests**

- Unification of Speyside & Deeside Forests
- Enhancement of native forests without deer fencing
- All existing native woodlands are regenerating and expanding without deer fences

### **Deer and Sporting Estates**

- Any sport/shooting meeting best management guidelines for the environment.
- **Deer**
  - Open reporting of numbers and habitat monitoring
  - Well established strategy based on ecological principles
  - Deer Commission encouraged and supported to exercise full range their powers.
  - Use of best practice guidelines to manage shooting based on state of habitat and condition of animals
  - Hunting of deer by licence administered by Cairngorm National Park Authority
  - Effective deer control mechanisms in place
  - Cairngorms Campaign scrutinising and asking salient questions.

- **Sheep**
  - CAP reform to have had a beneficial effect on Cairngorms area by removing emphasis on intense stocking.
  - Previous subsidy redirected to rural employment ( such as shepherding, traditional skills)

#### **Birdlife**

- Healthy populations of top predators and prey
- all flourishing
  - Farmland birds (eg waders)
  - Birds of prey
  - Woodland grouse
  - Mountain top birds
  - **Cross-bills and crested tits**

#### **Access and tracks**

- Access legislation implemented and not inhibiting recreational opportunities
- Access points to National Park are already established (2004), but in the future these are managed using “soft” management techniques recognising the importance of tourism to the local and Highland economy.
- Full range of suitable accommodation in the settlement zones incorporating bunk houses to guesthouses with recreation friendly services
- Visitors are encouraged to get out of their cars!
- Network of paths in forests and straths. Path surfaces to be low tech, using hard techniques only to address localised problems.
- Range of landscapes from wildness (no cairns, tracks, signs) to managed landscapes, each having its place and value.
- Access points managed by parking, bus services etc and sized to suit sensitivity/”carrying capacity”/fragility of area being accessed.
- Reduced and reinstated vehicular tracks in Cairngorms area (montane and wild land zones).
- No artificial access to the tops ie montane and fragile zones

#### **Sustainable Transport**

- Fewer cars and lorries within and around the National Park
- Measurably reduced emissions and pollution impacting on the National Park
- Improved and environmentally sound public transport serving the Cairngorms National Park

#### **Ranger Service**

- Integrated service, current concerns wrt coherency addressed.
- Coordinated and consistent, not dispersed as at present

### **3rd session : What should we do?**

#### **What roles should we adopt?**

- Maintain and develop our role (position) with the public in view of the increase in public interest and use of the National Park
- Encourage everyone to appreciate and conserve the beauty, character, natural & cultural heritage of the area
- Maintain critical overview of the National Park Authority processes

#### **What actions should we take?**

- We should broaden our support base
- Stimulate public interest in the Cairngorms area as a National Park
- Provide transport information & make web site point of information
- Website : improve what exists
- Focus on deer
- Funicular – ask HBOS customers & shareholders to ask questions re interest rate and underwriting of Cairngorm Mountain Railway Company
- Work with other bodies who share our concerns
- Use petitioning process within Scottish Parliament wrt:-
  - Boundaries
  - Funicular funding
  - Deer management
- Development on policies on forests, woodland, access, water, communities, transport
- Review and revise Manifesto ~ time for Manifesto III
- Find out and review relevant designations and legislation that apply to Cairngorm NP Area and ensure CNPB/A meet these standards
- Action on current and possible public funding for developments and actions in CNPA
- Focus on coherent Cairngorms area – not just NP Area
- Areas of debate to raise and focus on:-
  - Value for public money
  - Compare and contrast collection of best practice case studies

### **4th Session : Who can help? Not run**

~~Footnote for info for Drennan : not for publicising: i) Speaking with Ian Lawson & Tim Ambrose after meeting all have a desire to prepare a critical review of the funicular and its operation to push for legal review of financial status and operation whilst insolvent, make case to be considered by public accounts committee/ audit commission/ challenge SNH and Highland Council over status of planning permission, VMP and legality of operation currently contravening planning requirements.~~

~~ii) Speaking to Mel Nichol—she volunteered spending some time to go after funding /grants (for replacement project officer?~~