

Report 3

The Report on the proposal for a National Park in the Cairngorms

A description of the consultation exercise in the local area

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Preface

The authors of this report were contracted by SNH to co-ordinate aspects of the local consultation on the proposed Cairngorms National Park, specifically:

- training a network of local facilitators from communities who opted to manage the consultation themselves;
- providing support to the facilitators during the consultation;
- administration of expenses for each of the communities;
- facilitation of meetings in communities that did not wish to manage the consultation themselves and in communities around the edge of the proposed National Park; and
- co-ordination of reports from community facilitators and submission of a summary report to SNH.

SNH is grateful to Bob, Alex and Susan for their services and for the contribution that they have made towards the involvement of people who live and work in the area in the establishment of a National Park in the Cairngorms.

Section 1: Introduction

- 1.1 This report describes the local consultation carried out by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) on the Scottish Executive's proposal for a National Park in the Cairngorms area. It gives both an account and a commentary on the effectiveness of the local consultation setting the context for the evaluation presented in Report 4. Section 1 of the report sets the local consultation in context, Section 2 describes the process of the local community consultation and Section 3 highlights some of the strengths and weaknesses of the process and makes recommendations on how any future consultation of this kind might be improved.
- 1.2 This report is one of a series of reports on the proposal for a National Park in the Cairngorms, the other reports being:

Report 1: The Report on the proposal for a National Park in the Cairngorms

This report, submitted to Ministers on 21 August 2001, contains SNH's advice to Ministers which was based on the views heard during the consultation exercise. As instructed by Ministers, the report makes clear and distinct the views of SNH in their role as advisers on the natural heritage. Section 2 of the report contains a comprehensive description of how SNH undertook the consultation.

Report 2: An Account of the information received during the Consultation Exercise

This report contains a summary of all the information SNH received during the consultation exercise, including written responses and reports of the events and initiatives held throughout Scotland. It includes extracts from the written responses to illustrate the range of views presented to SNH in response to the main themes of the consultation.

Report 4: An Independent Assessment of the Consultation on the Proposed National Park for the Cairngorms

This report presents an independent evaluation of the public consultation. It was undertaken by a post-graduate student at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of St Andrews. The author is an employee of Parks Canada, the Canadian National Parks Service.

Background

- 1.3 In 1997 the Government announced its intention to establish National Parks in Scotland and proposed that the first should be established in Loch Lomond and The Trossachs and also that such a designation may be appropriate for the Cairngorms. Scottish Natural Heritage undertook the initial consultation on these proposals in November 1998 and, a little less than two years later, the Scottish Parliament passed the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000.
- 1.4 On 19 September 2000, Scottish Ministers made a formal proposal to establish a National Park in the Cairngorms area. SNH was appointed at the same time to act as reporter, to consult and advise Ministers on the proposal.
- 1.5 The requirement from the Scottish Executive outlined the matters to be considered and gave guidance on aspects of the consultation process. Scottish Ministers set a number of aims for SNH.

- To consult with all statutory consultees including local authorities, community councils and those people who appear to be representative of the interests of those who live, work or carry on business in or near the area to which the proposal relates, as well as any other people SNH consider appropriate.
- To ensure that the consultation is participatory, and that steps are taken to ensure that people have an opportunity to discuss issues, and suggest and consider alternatives. Meetings with interest groups should be part of the process.
- To ensure that agencies and public bodies representative of relevant interests, including those representative of social and economic interests, are consulted and their views reported.
- To build on the preparatory work undertaken by SNH at the request of Scottish Ministers during 2000, which paved the way for a formal consultation.

1.6 In addition SNH developed a number of more specific objectives for the consultation process.

- To ensure the effective participation of both local and national interests.
- To encourage a significantly greater level of involvement from local people than the previous consultation in the area in 1998/99 when 91 written responses were received from individuals and organisations within the area out of a total of 451 responses which were received; and around 600 people attended public meetings held in the area.
- To build on the existing structures for involvement in the area, notably the Cairngorms Partnership Advisory Panel, the four Peer Groups of the Cairngorms Partnership (Community Councils Group, Recreation Forum, Ward Councillors Group, Scottish Landowners' Federation Liaison Group) and the Cairngorms Local Authorities' Group of officers and members.
- To provide for the involvement of certain target groups (e.g. farmers, businesses, and young people).
- To promote a better understanding of the legislative and policy framework for Scottish National Parks, and the issues and opportunities involved in their designation.

1.7 In addition to the community-led consultation exercise which is the subject of this report, the main elements of the consultation were as follows.

- The **consultation document** described the proposal and set out the main issues on which views were sought;
- A **summary consultation leaflet** provided a brief summary of the main consultation document with a tear-off response-form;
- A **twenty questions** leaflet provided answers to commonly asked questions;
- **Information packs on National Parks in Scotland** were prepared to

- provide general information on National Parks;
- **Static displays and posters** were developed for use at public meetings and open events;
- **SNH's web-site** provided information on the National Park proposal in the Cairngorms;
- **A "Think-net" discussion web-site** (www.think-net.org), organised by the Highland Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, BT and SNH, encouraged on-line discussion about National Parks;
- **A telephone helpdesk** was available during office hours; and
- Many **meetings** were held with key parties (including local authorities and other public bodies and interested groups) and in six cities throughout Scotland.

1.8 The approach to the consultation was developed applying, as far as possible, the lessons learnt from previous experience. An important contribution to designing the process was made by the local community representatives and other stakeholders. The Government's own advice on handling consultation was also followed. To understand the process it is important to be aware of the interests and expectations of the different stakeholder groups in the local area.

Interests of Government and Public Sector Organisations

1.9 The interest from Government in consulting and involving communities has grown significantly throughout the 1990s (Downie and Elrick, 2000). This is partly due to the growth in a customer-oriented approach to providing local public services. Allied to this has been a growth and commitment to consult with communities on proposals which might affect their quality of life. As a result of this experience (Hambleton, 1998; Rogers, *et al*, 2000) awareness was raised about the need to build community capacity. This has been described as:

"Development work that strengthens the ability of community organisations and groups to build their structures, systems, people and skills so that they are better able to define and achieve their objectives and engage in consultation and planning, manage community projects and take part in partnerships and community enterprises. It includes aspects of training, organisational and personal development and resource building, organised in a planned and self conscious manner, reflecting the principles of empowerment and equality." (Skinner, 1997)

Community Councils, Associations and Local Communities

1.10 Community councils were created to offset the remoteness of local government at the reorganisation in 1975. There are currently some 1,100 community councils existing throughout Scotland involving some 14,000 people as community councillors (Elrick and Downie, 1993). Their primary purposes have been expressed as:

- ascertaining, co-ordinating and expressing...the views of the communities they represent; and
- taking action in the interests of that community as appears expedient and practicable.

1.11 Since that time community councils have been given more responsibility and, for example, must now be consulted on planning applications which affect their area and can be referred to by the Government in relation to Local Agenda 21,

and rural and urban regeneration projects.

1.12 In December 1999 the Cairngorms Partnership, as part of a wider programme of work on community capacity building, funded a study to identify the support and training needs of community councils in the area. The study was managed by the Cairngorms Community Councils Group which had been set up as one of four Peer Groups of the Cairngorms Partnership to involve communities in the implementation of the Partnership's Management Strategy. During the study the consultants made contact with members of community councils within the Partnership area to discuss their requirements for support. Existing providers of support were identified and reviewed; and recommendations were made on the range of methods which could be used to form part of a support package. The report identified the training and support needs of communities and the options for meeting those needs (Downie and Forsyth, 2000).

1.13 The findings of the study were discussed at a meeting of community councils and community associations in Tomintoul on 10 June 2000. At this meeting the community representatives reviewed their previous experience of consultations in the Cairngorms with the Cairngorms Partnership and SNH and then came up with the following recommendations for the consultation on a proposed National Park in the Cairngorms area. Those responsible for managing the consultation should:

- build community capacity by addressing the training and support needs identified in the community needs study (Downie and Forsyth, 2000);
- involve the wider community and raise the profile of community councils;
- ensure that information about the consultation is effectively disseminated;
- work with community councils to provide access to effective development workers;
- promote more effective links to all sections of the wider community;
- identify training and learning programme costs; and
- provide training for development workers.

These recommendations were subsequently adopted by SNH for the consultation in the Cairngorms area as described in Section 2 of this report.

Other significant stakeholders

1.14 The other significant stakeholder in the consultation process was SNH itself. Increasingly SNH has endeavored to develop experience and expertise in involving communities in its local work. The present consultation followed on from an earlier and more general consultation led by SNH (1998) on the basis on which National Parks might be created in Scotland. The views gathered were taken into account before SNH advised the Scottish Executive (SNH, 1999). This earlier work undertaken by SNH included:

- widespread circulation of a consultation document and an executive summary;
- 23 meetings in the area, organised with the Cairngorms Partnership, which were attended by around 600 people;
- meetings with organisations and interest groups, nationally and in the area;
- seminars to encourage discussion of specialist themes such as the socio-economic benefits of National Parks;
- the commissioning of research about, for example, how National Parks operated in other countries; and

- a number of initiatives to promote discussion about the suitability of National Parks in the area including the funding of a study trip by farmers from the Cairngorms area to National and Regional Parks in France.

This advice was considered by the Scottish Executive and led to the passing of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000.

Summary

- The consultation on the proposed National Park built on earlier work undertaken in the area by SNH and the Cairngorms Partnership.
- There was an expectation from stakeholders that the process would be open, inclusive and participatory.
- The stakeholders also expected that the consultation would build the capacity of communities to become more involved in discussions about future management of the area and that wider participation of community interests would be possible.
- The key parties inputting to the process were the community councils and associations, the local facilitators, the consultants who coordinated the local consultation, SNH and the participants who made their views known.

Section 2: The Consultation Process

Approach and methodology

2.1 On the basis of the discussions described earlier the approach taken by SNH to the consultation in the Cairngorms area was to directly involve the community councils and associations in the planning and implementation of the consultation. It was envisaged that this would provide two related sets of benefits.

- The consultation itself would be more effective as the community councils would be familiar with the channels used for communication in their areas, could potentially involve more people and the presence of a local facilitator would allow more time for discussion of the proposals. The councils would also have the opportunity of targeting the consultation at groups who may not normally participate in such discussions.
- The skills of people living within the communities would be improved and the capacity of the communities to respond to similar consultations in the future would be enhanced.

2.2 SNH gave the community councils and associations in the area a choice about how they would like to see the consultation proceed in their areas.

A community-led consultation

- Option A: Community councils could opt to manage the consultation using a community councillor as a facilitator. Expenses would be paid by SNH.
- Option B: Community councils could opt to manage the consultation through a paid facilitator of their choice. Expenses would be paid by SNH.

Independently facilitated meetings

- Option C: Community councils could opt for a single open meeting at a local venue with an independent facilitator.

2.3 The consultation process had two key components.

Informing: Participants in the consultation events had to be given information about the National Park proposal to enable them to comment and make suggestions. The facilitators of the local community-led consultation exercises needed to be familiar with this information and also have a deeper understanding of the issues to enable them to promote and encourage discussion. A list of materials available to facilitators for use in their local consultations is presented in Annex A.

Consulting: The local consultations had to be open, interactive and inclusive. This required knowledge of appropriate techniques and methods, including the dynamics of meetings and group work, (for example, how to deal with individuals who dominate meetings or who are negative), the importance of selecting an appropriate venue, and of the range of communication techniques and their suitability for different groups.

Management of the local consultation

- 2.4 The whole of the consultation process in the Cairngorms area was overseen by a Local Consultation Steering Group which comprised representatives from each of the main stakeholders:

Ron Macdonald (Chair)	Grampian Area Manager, SNH
Mark Wrightham	Cairngorms Project Officer, SNH
Joyce Simpson	Convenor, Cairngorms Community Councils Group
Debbie Strang	Cairngorms Partnership

Steering Group meetings were also attended by Kathy Rettie, a post-graduate student at the University of St Andrews who was undertaking an independent assessment of the consultation for SNH as part of her studies.

- 2.5 The steering group was responsible for the selection of consultants (the authors of this report) who were responsible for:
- training the local facilitators from communities that had opted to manage the consultation themselves;
 - providing support to the facilitators during the consultation;
 - administration of expenses for each of the communities;
 - facilitation of meetings in communities that did not wish to manage the consultation themselves and in communities around the edge of the proposed National Park; and
 - co-ordination of reports from community facilitators and submission of a summary report to SNH.

The community-led consultation

- 2.6 The communities who opted to manage the consultation themselves (options A or B) are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Communities who opted to manage the consultation themselves

Community Council or Association	Facilitator(s)
Ballogie and Birse Community Council	Freida Morrison John Addy
Blair Atholl and Struan Community Council	Innes Smith Julie Gardiner
Carrbridge and Vicinity Community Council	Kate Adamson
Cromdale and Advie Community Council	Wendy Alexander Miriam Clift
Dulnain Bridge and Vicinity Community Council	Mary McCafferty
Finzean Community Council	John Forster Kate Farquharson
Kincraig and Vicinity Community Council	Nic Bullivant
Aviemore and Vicinity Community Council	Ian Malcolm
Ballater and Crathie Community Council	Peter Dawes
Boat of Garten and Vicinity Community Council	Laurie Wedderburn Kate Adamson
Braemar Community Council	Peter Dawes
Grantown and Vicinity Community Council	Francesca Scott
Killiecrankie and Fincastle Community Council	Alex Cruikshank
Kingussie and Vicinity Community Council	Bernie Jones
Kirkmichael and Tomintoul Community Association	Sheila Thompson
Kirriemuir Community Council	Claire Broadhurst Helen Humphries
Laggan Community Association	Judy Carey Lucy Grant
Mid-Deeside Community Council	Drennan Watson
Nethy Bridge and Vicinity Community Council	Shirley Bateman
Rothiemurchus and Glenmore Community Association	Laurie Wedderburn Mary Ferguson

2.7 A series of training events and meetings were held for facilitators and these attracted 32 participants during the consultation period. Two training days were held in early January 2001, before the local consultations commenced. The aims of the initial training days were:

- to provide information about the National Park proposal and the overall plans for the consultation;
- to identify the skills and approaches required for effective community consultation;
- to begin to devise draft local consultation programmes;
- to agree and clarify further information, support and other needs; and
- to agree future steps for the community consultation exercise.

2.8 The training event was split into three sessions. The first, a presentation of the proposal for a National Park in the Cairngorms by SNH, was intended to inform participants about what was in Ministers' proposal, the key issues of the consultation and the information which was available. The second session

explored different techniques of consultation, their advantages and disadvantages and the skills required of facilitators. The third session started the process of planning the local consultation exercises in each community.

2.9 Participants generally found the day useful and informative. Comments received from participants are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Feedback from facilitators following the first training events

What was useful?		What could have been better?	
Organisation	Very good Excellent (2) Well managed Well focused Useful Run efficiently Well organised (2)	Training event content	Too much from participants, not enough from trainers Huge amount to do in too little time (2) More general discussion on methods would have helped
Communication	Good to meet other facilitators Good meeting others involved Open discussion Good to meet SNH Skilful presenting	Time-scale	More time - it all felt a bit rushed Not enough time for filling our methods sheets Felt rushed
Information	Excellent starting point Clarification of roles Informative (2) Best thing that has happened to me in 2001 Useful handout Most issues were covered	Information	Access to information More on facilitation skills More for project management More for content exposition
Time	A lot squeezed in Busy Full programme	Other	A warm room More coffee Tiring More short breaks
Support	Opportunity for questions Ideas about methods and motivating participation		

2.10 Some general points also became evident afterwards. It was felt that it might have been better to have a two-day programme to allow more time for discussion. Secondly, it was felt that it would have been helpful, were it possible, to have had copies of the information material SNH had prepared for the consultation before the meeting. Participants would then have been more familiar with the material, better prepared to raise questions and issues and more able to identify other complementary material of use during the local consultations.

2.11 During the training events participants were also introduced to two proformas which had been prepared to assist the planning of each local consultation exercise and to enable the consultants to secure consistency of outputs. The first proforma recorded the methods to be used in each community, why they had been chosen and the target group. The second proforma was to be completed for each method being used and recorded the tasks, when they had to be undertaken, who else should be involved, the resources required, how the event would be recorded and how success would be measured. The

consultation plan, as described on the two proformas, had to be seen and approved by each community council, thereby maintaining their close involvement with all stages of the process.

2.12 Two further day-long training events took place four weeks after the first training days and provided an opportunity for facilitators to share experiences, to check on progress and to focus on the action required for the future. It was generally agreed that the progress made in each community was very good with nearly all the facilitators working to meet their target dates. The range of methods, ideas and achievements suggested by facilitators and community representatives was remarkable. Some of the feedback is shown on Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3: Examples of ideas and achievements arising at the second training events

Incentives	Make meetings as informal as possible, offer refreshments
Flexibility	Run "drop-in" sessions so that people do not have to attend at a particular time
Targeting the consultation	Focus groups with individual invitations (but don't call them focus groups) Making contact with people and generating interest Meetings in houses with invitations Send out personal invitations I spoke to a women's group, a toddlers' group and the youth club Arranged consultation with local groups and businesses I talked to the Women's Rural Institute
Generating Involvement	The consultation process is operating at a local level The community council approved my programme People writing their own comments in small groups then presenting them to others in meetings Discussed programme at community association meeting: four local groups want input
Resources	Set up a resource centre on the High Street First draft of the questionnaire has been prepared Run two training sessions with community education colleagues/volunteers
Distribution of materials	Flyers have been distributed Insert our own leaflet into newspapers in the village shop
Publicity	Coverage in the Strathy (local newspaper) SNH leaflets being circulated to every house is helpful where that has happened Publicity for meetings in Ballater in the Deeside Piper and on local radio
Methods adopted and progress	15 street coffee morning /evenings have been organised Public meetings arranged in Rothiemurchus/Glenmore, Boat of Garten, Cromdale Invitations have been sent out for meetings in Carrbridge/Kincraig and Vicinity. Aviemore questionnaire has been drafted Consultation opportunity in Tesco with a back-up display "Drop-in" session has been organised in the Cairngorm Hotel
Feedback	Aiming for open meetings towards the end to 'mop up' those missed earlier I want to provide feedback about the result of the consultation

Table 4: Examples of problems, frustrations and barriers to progress reported at the second training event

Information	<p>People don't have enough information</p> <p>The information which is available is difficult to understand - particularly the main consultation document which is very technical and detailed</p> <p>Everything is up in the air</p> <p>Need a "What next" information sheet</p>
Time-scale	<p>Getting into existing groups' programmes requires months of forward planning not just a couple of weeks</p> <p>Delay due to the requirement for community councils' approval</p> <p>Only getting ten minutes at the end of other groups' agendas</p>
Participation	<p>Apathy and cynicism in the community</p> <p>Lack of response to the initial contact</p> <p>Not getting help from community councils</p> <p>Not getting <u>everybody</u> to the meetings</p> <p>Defensiveness</p> <p>Even the community council needs coaxing!</p>
Weather	<p>Build in planning time for weather</p>
Other	<p>Taking notes at the same time as facilitating is difficult</p> <p>Need support with facilitation of meetings</p>

2.13 Several themes emerged particularly strongly from the facilitators' feedback. There was criticism that the materials, particularly the main consultation document, were not user-friendly. A few facilitators were experiencing delays in getting the community council to endorse their consultation plan and to take a more pro-active role in the consultation. Finally, some facilitators were finding that the time required to organise particular events or methods was difficult to reconcile with the overall consultation time-scale. It was also felt that the consultation exercise generally needed higher-profile publicity in the area.

2.14 At the time of the second training event the facilitators were starting to consider the production of their final reports, so time was spent going through them and checking that everyone was confident about using a standard report format. The format had been produced to ensure that there was consistency in the outcomes of each local consultation and to facilitate analysis. There was, however, still scope for flexibility for facilitators to reflect the differences between communities.

2.15 The final facilitators' meetings were held over several weeks before the end of the consultation and focused on the tasks still to be completed. The main theme was the preparation of the reports and setting deadlines by which this would be completed. Each report required the endorsement of the relevant community council or community association. Councils had to confirm that they were satisfied that the consultation had been conducted effectively and reflected, as far as possible, the views of the community.

2.16 There was also an opportunity at the meetings to reflect on some overarching issues.

Foot and Mouth Disease: The outbreak of foot and mouth disease had some adverse implications for the consultation. Preventative measures had been introduced where possible to contain the spread of the disease. Some meetings which would have involved farmers and land managers had to be cancelled. The facilitators generally overcame such difficulties through

telephone interviews and postal questionnaires. The conclusion of most facilitators was that the disease outbreak had no impact on the locally facilitated consultations.

Lack of participation: Some facilitators were still concerned that there were sections of each community who had not participated in their consultations. SNH agreed to encourage the person who was assessing the effectiveness of the consultation to undertake interviews in selected locations to gather information as to why people had not participated in the consultation as a source of useful information for the future.

General issues: Facilitators also recorded a number of general issues about the process which were becoming apparent.

- It was felt to be a disadvantage if the facilitator did not live in the area. Local facilitators have more access to people and knowledge of the community dynamics.
- Facilitators must have no fear! Organising group discussions, giving tasks, asking people to stick things against preferences can be seen as risky and the easy way is to abandon it in favour of presentation and comment from the floor. This is less productive and enjoyable.
- The need for facilitators to be aware of, and work with, the particular culture of their community.
- The need to keep under review the age-range of people who are participating and to respond accordingly to involve all age groups.
- The SNH consultation document is too complex. Greater thought should be given to providing appropriate materials.
- The questions posed by facilitators are critical in determining the responses received.
- Note should be taken of the advantages and disadvantages of different methods.
- Facilitators should be aware of the time-scale and plan and review accordingly.
- Note and learn from the experience of other facilitators.
- Facilitators need good communication links with other stakeholders and with support mechanisms.

2.17 In addition to the series of training events described above a number of measures were taken to promote sharing of ideas. The facilitators were encouraged to network and to share stories of successes and failures between meetings. An Update Sheet was also produced and circulated regularly to ensure that facilitators were aware of their role in the overall process. An example is presented in Annex B.

Independently facilitated meetings

2.18 A number of community councils and associations (Table 5) opted not to manage the consultation in their areas but preferred a single open meeting at a local venue with an independent facilitator (Option C).

Table 5: Community Councils and Associations who opted for independently facilitated meetings

Community Council or Association	Number of participants
Dalwhinnie	8
Donside	7
Glenlivet and Inveravon	7
Kirriemuir Landward East and Kirriemuir Landward West	35
Mount Blair	8
Newtonmore and Vicinity	32
Pitlochry and Moulin	17
Rannoch and Tummel	11

Inveresk Community Council decided that as the community had been attending nearby meetings, a separate meeting was not required.

2.19 Independently facilitated meetings were also held in communities around the edge of the proposed National Park (Table 6).

Table 6: Community events on the periphery of the proposed National Park

Community	Number of participants
Aberlour	5
Aberfeldy	9
Alford	8
Blairgowrie	16
Mid-Atholl, Strathtay and Grandtully	24
Laurencekirk and Fettercairn	8

2.20 All these meetings were facilitated by one of the consultants and followed more or less the same format. Each meeting lasted approximately 1½ - 2 hours. Participants were welcomed by the facilitator who explained that his role was to ensure that the context of the meeting within the overall consultation process was explained; that the meetings were open and inclusive; that everyone had an opportunity to make comments and suggestions; that the key results of the discussion were accurately recorded; and that participants were aware of the other opportunities they had for making their views known to SNH. After the welcome a representative from SNH outlined the background to the proposal for a National Park in the Cairngorms and highlighted some of the key issues of the consultation. Care was taken not to direct or necessarily restrict the discussion.

2.21 Where possible, the audience was seated in small groups around a table. This created an informal and relaxed atmosphere and enabled group discussion. The participants at each table were asked to discuss the key issues and record their views on a flip-chart. The sheet was divided into the key themes of the consultation exercise:

- the principle of the National Park;
- the area of the proposed National Park;
- the powers of the National Park Authority;
- membership of the governing Board of the Park Authority; and
- the name of the National Park and other issues.

In some circumstances the participants worked in one group because there were very few participants (e.g. in Aberlour), because the number of participants was too large to sit around small tables (e.g. in Newtonmore) or because the majority of the group did not want to discuss the proposal in smaller groups (e.g. in Kinloch Rannoch).

2.22 The final part of each meeting was reserved for a general discussion. The facilitator recorded any remaining comments and also prompted questions which had not already been covered. At each meeting the main consultation document, summary leaflet and the information sheets were available for each participant. Copies of previous reports and other relevant material were also available for inspection. The SNH exhibition on the proposals was also on display. The vast majority of people who commented (91%) found the information available at the meetings to be “quite” or “very useful”.

2.23 At the end participants were given the opportunity to talk to the facilitator or to SNH staff informally. Participants were asked to note on a ‘post it’ label to be stuck to a wall board any further comments or thoughts about the effectiveness of the meeting. The results of feedback were very positive with 92% of those who recorded a comment having found the meetings useful and enjoyable. Negative comments mainly referred to the validity of the exercise, the role of SNH as reporter, publicity for the meetings and complexity of the written information. Examples of typical comments from participants in the meetings are shown in Table 7:

Table 7: Examples of comments received from participants following the independently facilitated meetings

<p>A very well organised meeting I particularly enjoyed the group discussion I felt we were listened to Very hard to make sense of such diverse views - well done! Why were there not more people here? Congratulations to SNH – for a change This was much better than a straightforward public meeting Not what I expected I am still sceptical about what good this might do Landowners and business will hold sway whatever we say How can SNH be both reporter and also adviser? Wasn't very well publicised, was it? There is too much in this document (main consultation document) to take in They say a picture is worth a thousand words - even the diagrams are hard to follow</p>
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For the Peripheral meetings SNH also ran a day-time surgery where people could view the material in advance of the meeting and ask questions.

Summary

The key components of the consultation process were informing and consulting.

- 20 community councils and community associations opted to manage their own local consultation exercises while eight preferred independently facilitated single meetings.
- 32 facilitators and community councillors participated in the training and facilitators' meetings.
- Overall facilitators found the training and support provided by the consultants useful and informative.
- The main concerns were the content of the published materials and the challenge of undertaking the local consultation within the overall time-scale.
- A high proportion of the participants in the independently facilitated meetings (92% of those who commented) found them useful and enjoyable.
- The main concerns from those at the independently facilitated meetings related to the written information.

Section 3: Overview

3.1 This section presents a brief overview of the process, and provides commentary on improvements that could be made to similar exercises in future. A more comprehensive and independent assessment of the consultation process is contained in Report 4.

The community-led consultation exercise

3.2 The consultation exercises managed and delivered locally attracted a very high level of involvement. More than 1,500 individuals were recorded by the facilitators as having participated in their meetings, surveys and other local events. This is almost certainly an underestimate, even allowing for double counting (where an individual was recorded at more than one event) as the facilitators did not comprehensively report attendance for all their events. In addition facilitators did not generally keep records of the groups who were approached for their views but who declined the offer of a meeting.

3.3 The facilitators of the community-led consultation organised a wide variety of events, including:

- open meetings (19)
- awareness-raising events (4)
- area-based focus groups (29)
- interest-based focus groups (10)
- meetings with existing groups (23)
- telephone survey (1)
- drop-in events (6)
- individual interview programmes (4)
- displays/exhibitions (2)
- questionnaire surveys (7).

3.4 These events made a significant contribution to the success of the consultation exercise but they also contributed to a number of longer term benefits including widespread participation of communities of interest; more people involved than in previous similar consultations; greater awareness of the proposed National Park amongst local people; enhanced skill levels amongst community members in organisation of a participatory consultation.

Training programme for facilitators

3.5 Some of the individuals who attended the training meetings already had considerable experience as facilitators. They found parts of the training too basic and would have preferred to focus principally on the issues surrounding the proposed National Park. New facilitators were appreciative of the training programme content and delivery but required more time for discussion of this area of work and also to find out about the National Park. In the future the programme should be delivered over at least 1½ days with the first day devoted to individuals with little or no experience of facilitation and the second day for everyone.

Written materials

3.6 It was felt that some of the written materials provided by SNH were not user-friendly and that the main consultation document in particular was seen as too

complex with too much technical information and 'jargon'. Facilitators did not have the opportunity to see the material until early January. Facilitators working at community level are a good pilot audience to assess the suitability of materials. They should be able to comment at the pre-production stage and also, where time allows, be involved in the production.

Community councils and community associations

- 3.7 Some representatives from community councils and associations attended the training meetings along with the facilitators and were directly involved in the local consultations on the ground. Other councils and associations left the consultation entirely to the facilitator. The consultation was a good opportunity for the groups to build the capacity of their members, to become more effectively involved in consultations and to promote their work within the local area. Several facilitators had difficulty in obtaining, within the time scale, the endorsement of the relevant council or association for their plans. In order to get the maximum benefit and effect from exercises of this kind, the councils or associations need to have strong links with the facilitators. In some communities the councils appointed a member as a link person for the duration of the consultation or set up a subgroup to oversee the process and these steps generally seem to have worked well.

Independently facilitated and peripheral meetings

- 3.8 In total 192 individuals participated in the independently facilitated meetings. On average, twice as many people participated in these meetings within the area (Option C) as in the peripheral meetings. This suggests that the further away the community from the potential Park, the more difficult it is to stimulate interest and engage with people. Consideration should be given to developing more creative ways to engage with communities in such circumstances.
- 3.9 The feedback from participants in these meetings was generally positive and the key issue, therefore, is how to generate interest and encourage participation. Individuals commented in some areas about a lack of publicity. In most cases the local community council undertook to publicise the events using posters provided by SNH. These were distributed two to three weeks before the event. The evidence from the local facilitators is that personal invitations and word of mouth are more effective publicity than posters. Consideration should be given to targeting invitations more effectively and seeking the assistance of community activists and leaders.

Summary

- The process was open, inclusive and participatory. Where particular groups were conspicuously absent, efforts were made to involve them.
- The community-led consultation, where local people acted as facilitators, strengthened the capacity of communities to participate in the future.
- The local consultations generated a considerable degree of involvement in discussions about the proposed National Park.
- Future consultations would benefit by using written materials tailored to each audience and also by providing the opportunity for facilitators to have an input into the design of consultation publications.
- While the process adopted for running the independently facilitated and peripheral meetings was judged by participants to have been successful, more consideration should be given to publicity arrangements and the generation of interest in these meetings.

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Annex A: Information that was available to the community consultation facilitators

Key Documents

- A proposal for a Cairngorms National Park, The Scottish Executive.
- SNH consultation document ; A proposal for a Cairngorms National Park; 44pp, 3 map inserts.
- Summary consultation document; 11pp with pull-out response form.
- National Parks for Scotland: Information Pack with eight A4 fact sheets on topics such as the benefits of National Parks and the implications for farmers and land managers.
- The Cairngorms as a National Park? Twenty frequently asked questions, A5 sized fold-out question and answer leaflet.
- Table summarising information collected by SNH for each sub-unit set against the three conditions from Section 2(2) of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 (to be read in conjunction with the consultation document)11pp A4 document

SNH Reviews

- Report No. 104: Analysis of socio-economic benefits of National Parks.
- Report No. 105: Models of National Parks.
- Report No. 106: Review of powers relevant to Scottish National Parks.
- Report No. 107: Best practice in community participation.
- Report No. 115: Land use and economic activity in possible National Park areas in Scotland.

Maps

- Options for the area of a National Park in the Cairngorms.
- A selection of designations in and around the Cairngorms area.
- Sub-units for the assessment of the area for a National Park in the Cairngorms.

Available as laminated A2 and A3 sheets and overhead transparencies

- Past and present boundaries in the Cairngorms area.
- Population density in the Cairngorms area according to sub-units for area assessment.
- Potential numbers of Local Authority-nominated members on the National Park Authority according to the three area options.

Display materials

- Displays incorporating explanatory text were available on loan for specific events.

Publicity materials

- A4 poster in style of consultation document, with blank space for details of local meetings.
- A5 notice in same style, publicising the consultation process and inviting responses to SNH.

Electronic media

- SNH website www.snh.org.uk with the full consultation document and various other information about National Parks.
- Online discussion of National Park issues www.think-net.org.
- e-copies of many of the above documents etc. were also available on request.
-

Annex B: Example of the Update Sheet which was used to communicate with facilitators during the consultation period

Finalising programmes and payments

Please let us know when you have finalised local programmes for consultation. Payments can be released when you pass the finalised programmes to us. Just a reminder, there are two funding options:

As originally proposed, the budget can be directly managed by the consultation co-ordinators, who will process monthly claims from community facilitators for time and expenses based on the. As originally intended, this approach should avoid imposing a burden on community councils who do not wish to manage the budget themselves.

Alternatively, the detailed process of budget management can be carried out by community councils. Under these circumstances, councils should complete a plan which sets out the proposed method of consultation and the total cost, up to the maximum. The anticipated costs must be clearly broken down and should include an allowance for 2 days of the facilitator's time to attend the training and support meetings. Otherwise, the allocation of funds to different aspects of the consultation (e.g. facilitator's time, expenses, booking fees for meetings) will be entirely up to the council concerned. Completion of this plan will trigger an initial payment of 50% of the total cost, with the balance payable on completion of the consultation. In order to pay the balance, we will require a breakdown of the consultation process to indicate that the planned strategy has been successfully implemented. Where this option has been chosen, the consultation co-ordinators will manage the two lump sum payments.

Some consultation methods

Below is a list of some of the methods which are being planned and used. Already there is a great variety. When programmes have been finalised we will put together a list of planned activities for each Community Council, so that you can contact each other to ask about plans and steal ideas!

- Use existing community organisations
- Drop-in sessions
- Door-to-door questionnaires
- Mail shot
- One-to-one interviews
- Phone interviews
- Public meeting
- Use local media for publicity
- Posters
- Focus groups
- Leaflet drop
- Publicity flyer
- Public displays
- Meeting employers
- Meeting key community groups
- Street consultation
- Individual village meetings
- Meetings with community groups/ employers

Some events which are already planned:

- open day in Ballater and Crathie in the Victoria Hall 8 February (SNH staff will be present)
- meeting for shepherds and gamekeepers in Blair Atholl
- public meeting planned for Birse and Ballogie on 6 March (SNH staff will be present)

Other events and programmes

Youth Events - two events are planned for local secondary schools to consider the National Park proposals. It is hoped that these events will combine fun with some serious discussion:

Peripheral community consultation - Consultation opportunities are planned for communities around the periphery of the proposed National Park area. These opportunities will be planned in conjunction with community councils and will comprise a day-long information surgery and an evening public meeting. SNH will publicise these events to local communities. The communities most likely to be involved are:

- Tomatin
- Aberlour or Dufftown
- Alford
- Fettercairn or Laurencekirk
- Blairgowrie
- Aberfeldy

Contact details for other facilitators

We have attached a list of contact details for all Community Council facilitators.

Questionnaires

We have been asked to draft some questions that could be included in questionnaires for local surveys. A version of this will be sent out next week.

Follow-up meetings for facilitators

Two follow-up meetings for facilitators have been planned. It is important that all facilitators attend one or other of these meetings. The purpose of the meetings is

- to share information about progress, achievements and hitches;
- to identify what else facilitators need; and
- to begin to plan the reports.

Meetings have been arranged as follows:

ON: Saturday 10 February
AT: 10 a.m.-12.30 p.m.
IN: Grantown YMCA Community Centre, 80 High Street,
Grantown-on-Spey (next door to the library)

OR

ON: Saturday 17 February
AT: 10.30 a.m.-1.00 p.m.
IN: Invercauld Arms Hotel, Braemar

Contacts

For all queries relating to National Parks and the wider consultation process, please contact SNH:

Cairngorms enquiry line (for general queries, requests for copies of consultation document, etc): cairngorms.reporter@snh.gov.uk

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For queries related to the community consultation process, meeting arrangements and funding:

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