

## How should the Cairngorms National Park be funded?

### Description

Last week the Heritage Lottery Fund announced that it had awarded Â£2.34m to the Tomintoul & Glenlivet Landscape Partnership in the northern part of the Cairngorms National Park to deliver 20 projects over a four year period ([see here](#)).

The plans include:

- Tomintoul Museum will become a Discovery Centre and tourist hub
- Blairfindy Castle and Scalan, an 18th-century seminary, will be conserved and made safe for visitors
- Woodlands will be restored along sections of the River Avon
- Wetland habitats for wading birds will be created
- Improvements to paths in the area
- A regional oral history project will collect stories that bring the landscape to life

While I am delighted that this investment is being made, we need to ask why funding for our National Parks appears dependent on grant applications? Like other under-funded public authorities, what the CNPA has done is to set up a number of Partnerships, which it uses to make funding applications because it does not have the resources to do things itself. Another example recently covered on parkswatch is the investment in upland footpaths through the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Project ([see here](#)).

The last CNPA Board meeting reported that the Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership had applied for Â£3.6m so there is a shortfall between what was awarded and what is needed. None of the Press Releases mention this as it detracts from the good news and might get people thinking are we really investing what we need to in our National Parks. In my response to the CNPA Partnership Plan, which completely fails to mention resources, I said this:

*There is no consideration of the resources needed to deliver the Park's statutory objectives or the Park Plan. Instead, there are references through the Plan to various pots of money that could be drawn on to meet the objectives of the Plan. There is no analysis of whether this is sufficient or what is really needed. In other words the Park Plan seems to just accept the current Government narratives about austerity. The result is there is no strategic direction in the Plan, only aspirational directions of travel. I think the Park needs to consider a fair way of increasing revenue (and not follow the example of the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park who are trying to sell everything with lots of unintended consequences). The simplest, fairest and most effective way of doing this would be through a small bednight tax as is found in many places on the continent.*

With Theresa May indicating at the Tory Party conference a change in direction in terms of austerity and renewed emphasis on public investment, the Scottish Government should be able to expect increased resources. There is no better time therefore for the CNPA to clearly set out what resources are needed in the National Park, both by itself and its other public sector partners (none of whom commit to investing any resources in the National Park in the draft Partnership Plan).

This though I think will take a major change in mindset from both the CNPA and the Scottish Government as is illustrated by their responses to the funding announcement:

*It's great to see this investment in and support for Scotland's landscapes.*

*Our landscapes are iconic and will provide a magnificent backdrop for these projects that will encourage people to explore Scotland's spectacular outdoors, protect our biodiversity, benefit rural communities and encourage visitors from home and abroad.*

(Roseanna Cunningham, Cabinet Secretary for the Environment)

A great statement but why does the Scottish Government not treat this as a core responsibility to be funded out of tax instead of leaving it to the lottery of the lottery?

*This is a massive boost, not just for Tomintoul and Glenlivet but for the wider National Park. Heritage Lottery funding will result in investment in new and improved facilities and infrastructure, new job opportunities and other community driven projects - there are exciting times ahead. I would like to thank and congratulate all those involved in helping to secure this funding.*

(Eleanor Mackintosh, CNPA Board Member and local resident)

I don't believe investment in infrastructure or jobs should depend on the lottery. I am not saying the CNPA should stop applying to the lottery, while that remains one of the main ways to secure resources, nor do I want to dent the enthusiasm of those who have worked to achieve this. But Eleanor Mackintosh and other Board Members should be using the Park's new Partnership Plan to set out a clear vision of what needs to be done in the National Park and the resources required to deliver this for the environment, for visitors and for the people who live there.

The CNPA won't get everything of course, partly because any additional funds for investment are likely to be far less than the UK Government spin suggests but also because no-one ever does, but

times are changing and the CNPA should be making the case that funding in our landscape should cease to be a lottery.

**Category**

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