

The Macaulay Institute



**INDICATORS AND
SUSTAINABLE TOURISM:
SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW
FINDINGS**

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Blackstock K.L., Scott, A.J., White V. and McCrum G.

The Macaulay Institute
Craigiebuckler
Aberdeen
AB15 8QH

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Aviemore, Badenoch and Strathspey
CNPA	Cairngorm National Park Authority
SD	Sustainable Development
ST	Sustainable Tourism
STS	Sustainable Tourism Strategy ('A Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism' (March 2005)
The Park	Cairngorm National Park
The Strategy	Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism
ViSIT	Visitor Service, Information and Tourism

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1 Introduction

The Cairngorms National Park has been awarded the 'European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas' and the CNPA is currently working towards adopting and applying a set of indicators. In support of this work, the Macaulay Institute has provided the CNPA with a report that provides a suggested approach to selecting and implementing indicators of sustainable tourism (see '*A Framework for Developing Indicators of Sustainable Tourism*'). The project aimed to support the CNPA and their ViSIT forum by providing a structure for thinking through the process of selecting indicators that encouraged transparency and deliberation by asking provocative questions, rather than providing 'answers'.

This paper outlines the main results from the 12 interviews undertaken with key stakeholders who have played a role in the development of the existing Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism (CNPA, 2005) in the Cairngorms National Park. This paper is one of three supplementary documents to the Framework report. The others are:

- Indicators of Sustainability and Sustainable Tourism: Some Example Sets
- Indicators and Sustainable Tourism: Literature Review.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in February 2006 by the authors using an interview guide (see Appendix One). The sample was selected to reflect a broad cross section of representatives on the ViSIT forum who represent private and public bodies and have different relationships with the tourism industry. The data was qualitatively analysed to assess similarities and differences in their answers; and where the data complemented or diverged from the guidance in the literature. In the paper, the italics refer to the authors' commentary on the data and the normal type to the results.

2 Defining Sustainable Tourism

The results can best be illustrated by a quote from one respondent who said 'none of us have a clear idea of what it is'; however, many did say that their involvement in the development of the strategy had initiated further consideration as to what it might mean and therefore they are coming closer to a shared understanding. *Given that sustainable tourism is a complex issue that has generated over ten years of academic debate and several definitions, this result is not surprising* (see White et al.'s (2006) literature review).

Most answers to Question 1 (see Appendix One) reflected the traditional idea of balancing the needs of the environment, the economy and the local community (i.e. the 'triple bottom line' approach) when developing and managing tourism. However, answers given in other questions, particularly the choice of indicators to measure ST, suggested that these responses somewhat glossed over a spectrum of views, from perspectives that prioritised the economic viability of

existing tourism enterprises to those who were concerned about the impacts of tourism on environmental and social resources in the Park. Some emphasised the economic end of the spectrum whilst others were concerned that the Strategy was slightly skewed in favour of the tourism industry and lacked attention to the environmental aspect. This resonates with Hunter's four paradigms of sustainable tourism (quoted in White et al., 2006). *This suggests a crucial difference in priorities.* No respondent mentioned intra-generational equity (distribution of costs and benefits in society) explicitly during the interview, although one did mention environmental justice and another mentioned low incomes and housing costs as an issue within the Park. *'Balance', although highly desirable is, in reality, rarely achievable in the highly dynamic and contested arena of sustainable development, so the mantra of balance is not always helpful for managers. It is important to consider how to address any imbalance: which of these views - from the economically-driven to the environmental-protectionist - takes precedence should a difference of priorities occur? The emphasis on consensus highlighted in the last ViSIT Forum meeting whilst laudable, does not prevent a conflict in priorities in the future.*

All the respondents recognised that sustainable tourism required a long-term perspective but the definition of long term varied from 10 years to over 100 years. The vision for ST in the Strategy is for 2010; although the Park Plan vision is for 25 years time, with priorities for action in the next 5 years. One respondent made the point that the time scale should start from 'tomorrow', *suggesting that ST is not only about the long term.* Another respondent put different time lines on the environment (10 – 100 years) to the economy (10 – 20 years) *which highlights the different feedback/response timescales for both impacts and policy interventions. Again such differences are likely to generate conflict over the kinds of actions and indicators that are required.*

The interviews were focussed on ST in the CNPA. However, six respondents noted that ST is not restricted to the National Park area; a couple discussed the importance of considering both the global and the local implications of the tourism industry, recognising that the Park has a 'porous boundary'; and three respondents mentioned issues of the ecological footprint of tourism in the Park (with an emphasis on the environmental impacts of air travel by overseas visitors). One respondent was concerned that the ViSIT Forum was too locally focussed and their agenda was dominated by short-term, local concerns which meant they missed wider strategic opportunities (developed further below).

Of the eleven respondents who answered, all seemed to suggest that ST was part of a broader sustainable development perspective, but that it was appropriate for the Strategy to focus on tourism as a distinct industry. *This may explain the skew towards economic and business related indicators (see below). However, as with the definition of ST, this apparent consensus belies a diversity of views as to why this integration was required.* Some noted that tourism had to be thought of in terms of its intersection with other sectors and social groups

because these were fundamental to delivering the tourism product, whereas others suggested that integration was required in terms of managing tourism's (negative?) impacts. *These differences of opinions also highlight contradictions in the overall vision for management and integration.*

3 What to measure?

Table 1 below illustrates the aspects of Sustainable Tourism that respondents felt ought to be covered (prior to seeing the existing draft indicators suggested in the STS) and our interpretation regarding whether these issues were already reflected in existing strategy. The ambivalent category (illustrated by ~) suggests that the indicator in the strategy, in our minds, could meet these requirements, but it depended on how the indicator was implemented.

Table 1: Sustainable Tourism Issues that were identified in Q7.

Issue Raised	Number	In STS
Effects on the environment	5	yes
Visitor satisfaction/ Critical evaluation of visitor satisfaction	4	~
Profitability of businesses /economic benefits	4	~
Litter	3	yes
What visitors are doing and where?	3	~
*Carrying capacity	1	no
*Impacts on enjoyment of the environment (locals and tourists)	1	~
*Sustainability of land use (tourism & other land uses)	1	no
Vehicle movements (and types of transport used) (to provide facilities for them and manage their impact)	2	~
Value of tourism	2	~
Quality of the tourism product	2	~
*Who is providing what services (audit of the products offered)?	1	~
Quality of employees (skills and training in delivery the product)	1	no
Employment for locally based people	1	no
*Do the local community feel part of the local industry?	1	no
Compliance with the access code	1	no
Volume of tourism	1	yes
Social benefits and environmental justices	1	no
Population stability	1	no
Employment	1	yes
Seasonality	1	yes
Who comes and why (what is the impact of marketing on data)?	1	no
Uptake of QA	1	yes
Visitor behaviour & are they responding to education/information?	1	no
*Quality of visitor information	1	no
Repeat visitors	1	yes
Green Tourism Business Scheme	1	yes
Visitor attractions visits but also data on retail and Food/beverage outlets	1	~
Occupancy	1	yes
Intention/desire to visit CNPA	1	no
Those who won't visit or won't return and why?	1	no

* Similar to indicator above but not totally the same.

Table 2 below illustrates the commentary provided by respondents on the draft indicators in the existing strategy. Please note that not all respondents commented on every indicator; and one respondent made no comment on the current list of indicators. The other respondents both added indicators and critiqued existing indicators, although they were all complimentary about the foundation that the list provided for implementation.

Table 2: Comments made on draft indicators from Strategy (Q. 9)

Draft Indicators	Comments (N who raised this)
Volume and spread of tourism	
Estimates of trips, nights and spending in the region	
Visitor numbers at attractions and main sites (monthly to get indicator of seasonality)	Also events, and number of tourists these attract, income (1)
Monthly occupancy at accommodation (see under enterprise performance)	
Traffic counts at main locations (monthly)	Implications of the A9 – how do you know who is a tourist, who is a commuter? (1)
Number of tourism development projects receiving planning permission (together with number of applications, number called in by CNPA, and outcome)	
Proportion of attractions and activity providers open all year	
Visitor satisfaction	
Percentage of visitors satisfied in general and with types of facility / service	Include locals using/ enjoying the Park (1)
Proportion of repeat visitors	
Number of complaints received	Visitors don't complain – better to ask them if they will return (2)
Tourism enterprise performance and satisfaction	
Monthly accommodation occupancy rates and attraction visitor numbers	
Performance increase or decrease compared to previous year	
Number of jobs supported - full time, part time; all year, seasonal	
Proportion of enterprises with quality certification	Not just how many with QA but what are the proportions in each group (e.g. 4 star) (1)
Number of enterprises using local produce	
Percentage of enterprises satisfied with CNPA	
Community reaction	Should be community benefit not community reaction (1)
Proportion of residents surveyed saying they are happy with tourism levels	Include staff- may not live within Park; distinguish between different types of 'community' (e.g. walking, canoeing etc) (1)
Number of complaints received relating to tourism	How complain? Who speaks for the community? (1)
Environmental impact	
Amounts raised through visitor payback schemes	Visitor payback is not an environmental issue but a management and awareness raising mechanism (1)

	Not in favour of a bed tax; operators won't collect voluntary donation (1)
Records of air and water quality	Not connected with ST (1)
Levels of litter in key sites	People will litter anyway (1)
Proportion of visitors arriving by public transport	Poor transport so pointless indicator at present (1)
Number of enterprises in Green Tourism Business Scheme	Many businesses won't take part (2)
Missing Indicators identified in Q9	Job retention rates (1)
	Employee satisfaction rates (1)
	Take account of existing env. condition (1)
	Housing affordability (1)
	Awareness/understanding of sustainable tourism by local and visitors (1)
	Awareness/understanding of environmental issues by visitors and staff (2)
	Public spend on tourism policies in the park (1)
	Who might recommend the park to others (3)
	Value – yield is based on quality (2)
	Need spread/dispersal of tourists and whether hotspots are changing (3)
	Who is the community – who is using what and what are their specific needs? (2)
	Proportion of local people in tourism employment (1)
	Do local residents feel part of the tourism industry (and how this changes over time) (1)
	Availability , accuracy and impact of visitor information (1)
	Business start up rates (1)
	Uptake of renewables as green business behaviour (1)

The 'gaps' which emerged from the analysis of the findings in tables A and B interviews are shown in Table 3 below. This commentary on the draft indicators can be considered in light of the definitions of sustainable tourism which repeated the triple bottom line approach (balancing environment, economics and social issues). *The emphasis is much greater on indicators of the economic performance and visitor satisfaction than of environmental or social impacts. The lack of indicators on social benefits and protecting local people's quality of life is a departure from the Europarc Charter.*

Table 3: Gaps or issues raised with existing indicators

Volume and spread of tourism	<p>Missing: Qualitative understanding of what visitors are doing and where (not just counts) Vehicle movements by type (more detailed than just traffic counts) Carrying Capacity</p> <p>Problems: Traffic Counts problematic due to influence of A9 Want/need to distinguish between locals enjoying the Park and visitors? Will this pick up changing 'hot spots'?</p>
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Visitor satisfaction	<p>Missing: Those who won't return or visit and why? Who would recommend the park to others and why? Impacts of tourism on enjoyment of park qualities (for visitors & locals)</p> <p>Problems: Critical evaluation of visitor satisfaction (most data meaningless)</p>
Tourism enterprise performance and satisfaction	<p>Missing: What is provided, by who and where (e.g. how many 4 star B&Bs, events)? Profitability of tourism enterprises Value of tourism (yield not just numbers) Quality of tourism product Quality of Visitor Information Quality of Visitor service (skills, attitude, training of the staff) Employment statistics for local people (including hourly earnings for comparison) Job retention rates and employee satisfaction rates Intention to visit the CNP – who comes and why (impact of marketing campaigns) Business start up rates</p> <p>Problems: Should also have performance data for other forms of tourism provision: retail, food and beverage outlets etc Heterogeneous industry – can't have blanket indicators for such diversity of products</p>
Community reaction	<p>Missing: Do the local population feel part of the tourism industry Understanding/ awareness of sustainable tourism</p> <p>Problems: Should be titled 'community benefits' or 'community impacts' not community reaction? People don't complain Or who are the 'community' – what is a representative complaint?</p>
Environmental impact	<p>Missing: Need to take account of existing environmental condition Environmental awareness by visitors and local residents Renewable energy uptake Monitor land use change (e.g. farming, forestry - all important part of landscape & therefore tourism industry) Natural heritage/ Biodiversity</p> <p>Problems: Visitor payback is not an environmental issue but overall management issue Not in favour of a bed-tax Air and water quality not connected with Sustainable Tourism People will litter anyway Public transport is poor so not a good indicator Many businesses won't take part in GBTS</p>
Others*	<p>Missing: Population stability Affordable housing within the Park Sustainability of land use in terms of tourism and other land uses Compliance with the access code Social benefits and environmental justice Visitor behaviour and whether they respond to education or information Awareness of sustainable tourism by visitors and locals Public spending on tourism policies in the park Communities of interests – what different needs for different types of users?</p>

**It was often difficult to fit suggestions for additional indicators under the headings provided in the STS. Also, they are expressed as 'issues' rather than 'indicators', so if the missing issues are considered important, then they have to be turned into a measure.*

One respondent felt that monitoring environmental quality was important for the CNPA (or partners) to do, but not appropriate as part of a set of sustainable tourism indicators (despite advocating a triple bottom line approach in their definition). *This finding might be explained in light of the discussion about the integration of the STS with the Park Plan*; one respondent was concerned that the STS should not take a tourism-focussed approach which neglected environmental and social issues, but another felt that although all three topics had to be addressed, environmental and social impacts could be discussed in other strategies. Thus, whilst the STS indicators should highlight headline indicators for those domains (environmental and social), they could focus on indicators for the tourism industry and the tourism experience in more detail. *There is also a question about how much visitor experience will be taken up in the Outdoor Access Strategy.*

It should be noted that the suggested indicators were not developed in consultation with stakeholders, but were based on the expert judgement of the consultants who felt that they reflected the priorities of the STS, with some additions by the CNPA board and officers. The intention was always that the list be revisited and adapted by those implementing and using the indicators. As one respondent put it, 'indicators can't cover everything' and thus those implementing the STS should resist the temptation to try to do so.

4 Why measure Sustainable Tourism?

Respondents were hesitant when asked to define indicators, but their responses illustrated a number of themes with regard to why indicators were required. The most frequently recurring reasons quoted were to observe and assess the impacts of policies to see if they are moving in the desired direction (N =10); one emphasised that these were mutually agreed aims and objectives. Only three respondents mentioned the need to measure the impact of visitors and two respondents mentioned the need to understand the current state, "where you are". Their emphasis on understanding trends and direction of progress, with the need for past 'baselines' and future 'targets' noted by 6 respondents *reflects some of the discussions of what kind of indicators are needed to be implemented*. Six mentioned the need for changing behaviour in response to indicator results. *This response suggests that this is an area where understanding needs to be developed; changing behaviour and acting in response to the indicator data is fundamental to their implementation and indeed the reason behind measuring progress in the first place* – as one respondent put it, 'unless you are aware of and can adjust to change, then it is very difficult to talk about sustainability'. Another two respondents did believe that indicator

results should be used to lobby decision makers and to shape future decisions (*but the implication is that it was not their responsibility to change themselves*) and another two believe the results could provide useful information for visitors (*but looking at the suggested indicators, it is not clear how*). One respondent observed that all Europarc destinations are struggling with this aspect of the Charter and another respondent observed that monitoring should enhance the special qualities of the Park. *As previously discussed, in defining ST respondents expressed a clear understanding of the need for 'balancing' environmental, economic and social aspects. There is thus great potential to build on this understanding, extending it to the selection and implementation of indicators, so that a 'balance' may be attained in this area of the STS.*

5 How to measure these issues?

One of the issues to emerge from the discussion of 'what indicators are for' seems to be confusion between monitoring and indicators. For example, one respondent felt that you could decide on actions and then monitor these actions or monitor issues and then use the data to make decisions – this iterative or cyclical relationship is the key to using indicators, but the respondent saw it as a linear, either/or decision.

In a similar vein, four respondents noted that indicators should be linked to the available data – we should monitor what we have or can afford to monitor. *Although economic viability is an important criterion in choosing indicators, in adopting this approach there is a danger that the STS will value what is measured rather than measure what we value.* The resource implication of data collection worried many respondents (N=6) although one highlighted the cost-effectiveness of using ICT (the web) for data collection. The issue of resources meant that indicators should be based on easy to measure data. Another felt that agencies would not monitor things if they weren't useful, so using existing data meant that it was also the most useful data *but it may not be fit for this particular purpose.* However, two other respondents felt that much of existing tourism statistics were very weak and could not be relied on. Only two respondents explicitly brought up the difference between qualitative and quantitative approaches to indicators and had a positive view of attitudinal indicators, *although a glance at tables 1 and 2 illustrates that others were thinking about indicators that measure motivations for action, as well as getting statistical patterns.*

Two respondents felt that the interpretation must be credible and this meant making sure the data, its analysis and its interpretation was rigorous, transparent and assessable. Four respondents highlighted the importance of communicating the result to the users and the community in order to stimulate awareness and encourage more responsible behaviour. Only one respondent explicitly highlighted that the choice of indicators must be consulted on, which they linked to the issue of credibility. Another three respondents noted that the indicators

must be user-friendly and meaningful as it was the ViSIT Forum who was going to use them. This links with the concern of another respondent who felt that there was still more work to do to make the STS and its implementation meaningful to the wider stakeholders in the Park; overlooking smaller businesses was raised as a particular concern. *This issue of wider buy-in from the many smaller businesses in the Park needs some careful attention. The role of the ViSIT Forum as a representative body needs to be clarified.*

One respondent felt it was up to experts (CNPA and Macaulay Institute) to refine the long list of indicators to a 'reasonable number'; another felt that if data was available then the number was irrelevant; and a third felt that the range of indicators must reflect the content of the Strategy, but the final number was up to those using the indicators i.e. the ViSIT forum. Only one respondent pointed out the challenge in assessing progress on each individual indicator and also taking an overview of the whole. *Again this is fundamental to the successful implementation of indicators and the apparent lack of awareness regarding this challenge does need to be addressed.*

The time periods given for collecting indicator data varied from monthly to every five years, depending on the indicator. *However, this was driven by the current availability of the data (i.e. occupancy rates are available monthly whilst other surveys occur at five year intervals) rather than an expression of need.* In the case of visitor satisfaction and visitor impact surveys, it was felt that it would be too expensive to collect the data more frequently. One respondent was concerned that five yearly intervals were too long, as problems could become entrenched before they were recognised and therefore tackled. Two respondents suggested collecting business statistics on a yearly basis and other indicators on a cycle of between 2 – 5 years.

A number of respondents raised the issue of the heterogeneity of the Park's tourism product and the range of suppliers, which has implications for the indicators. Given the range of markets and the differences in product supplied between Deeside, Moray and Badenoch/ Strathspey, they argued that you could not have 'tourism' indicators as there were different forms of tourism in different places. Likewise, two respondents commented that the choice of indicators would depend on their audience, as indicator results can be used for PR, or to make policy, or to make individual business decisions. *The discussion about whether data should be broken down by spatial area and by product type illustrates the focus on market intelligence rather than recognising that the indicators are to support the Park-wide Strategy. It may be appropriate to focus on sub-Park areas or specific products, but this should be driven by a strategic decision regarding sustainable tourism development for the National Park.*

6 Who should measure these issues?

There was an interesting shift between the answers to Q2 and Q8 (see Appendix One) regarding who had responsibility for sustainable tourism and for implementing the indicators for the STS. The most common answer to the question – ‘who do you think should be involved in striving to make tourism more sustainable?’ – was ‘everyone’. One respondent felt that the STS illustrated why ST was everyone’s responsibility. All mentioned the inclusion of businesses - one respondent felt that the Strategy should be driven by businesses rather than the agencies, such as the CNPA. Another two who responded ‘everyone’ was responsible did believe that the long term future for sustainable tourism stemmed from a bottom-up process with strong business ‘buy-in’. Businesses also include staff, who were mentioned specifically by three respondents. This has very strong implications for taking responsibility of the Strategy and indicators but we didn’t see evidence of this in the answers later in the survey (especially Q8). For example, one respondent who felt any process must be bottom-up also requested that the CNPA display leadership regarding the implementation of the indicators.

Likewise, there was some concern that the ViSIT Forum is not totally representative and does not fully understand its responsibilities to act on behalf of the tourism industry. Three respondents were concerned about the lack of wider industry buy-in beyond those attending the ViSIT Forum (see also comments about needing more outreach below). Three quarters of respondents mentioned the CNPA, referring to their role as an ‘enabler’, ‘catalyst’, or ‘coordinator’ to ensure that ‘everyone’ acted with awareness. Seven respondents mentioned public agencies but only three respondents mentioned NGOs as partners in delivering sustainable tourism. Half the respondents mentioned the responsibility of visitors to act sustainably, which links to the indicators on visitor behaviour and visitor impacts, with a couple of respondents using voluntary taxes as examples of how individuals could support the work of the STS. Eight respondents mentioned the role of residents, with several repeating the adage that ‘tourism is everyone’s business’. Three of these respondents also commented that the process has not asked residents about their attitudes to sustainable tourism, or their own role in delivering this. In terms of missing voices, two respondents felt that the process did not engage national bodies like Historic Scotland or the National Trust and two felt that the lack of consultation with ‘green’ groups created unnecessary conflict. However, most respondents felt that the consultation process for the STS had been very well handled and there was praise for staff at the CNPA and the consultants.

Most respondents (N=9) suggested who could and should do the monitoring/data collection. The most common suggestions were the public agencies (with one arguing that public agencies are paid to protect public goods), but also included working with private businesses. When discussing data from enterprises, three respondents highlighted that commercial confidentiality issues could be a barrier

to some data provision. *It is unclear how in reality this would be the case as data is not traceable to individual organisations.* However, there are problems with using existing data sets as 'Visit Scotland's' data does not map directly onto the Park boundaries (same problem applies with Local Authority data collection) and environmental data may not be collected in the main tourist and recreational areas. All of these comments suggest that data will have to be translated to fit the STS, which requires resources and expertise. All those commenting identified this as the CNPA's role and responsibility to resource it. Another respondent highlighted the role of the appropriate public agencies to validate the data collected.

CNPA was seen as having a leading role in implementing the indicators by 7 respondents. However, all felt that businesses must take ownership of outcomes and respond to them appropriately. One of these respondents felt that getting individuals and businesses in the Park to assist with monitoring would be a good way to get ownership of the indicators and ensure the results would be acted upon. Another respondent felt the implementation of indicators had to be bottom-up, with two others believing that the strategic direction should come from CNPA but delivery from all those working in the Park. *Our interpretation of these somewhat confusing data is that there is a wide range of stakeholders who could and should contribute to data collection, but it will be up to the CNPA to collate, validate and report on the information. The issue of acting on the results, however, will fall on a variety of shoulders and it is important that businesses that have so-called buy-in are fully aware of the possible implications for them.*

The issue of a flexible approach, with the ability to adapt to change and maintaining a co-ordinated delivery was raised by three respondents who drew attention to the need for joined-up thinking and partnership working. *However, there is tension between the CNPA being an enabling body in partnership with others, but having no authority over others and CNPA being expected to lead the implementation of the Strategy. There is considerable diversity in how the 'partnership' is understood.* Given that two people alluded to difficulties in communication and partnership between agencies involved in the ViSIT Forum, *further attention to the governance mechanisms of ViSIT Forum seem warranted.*

7 Integration with the Cairngorms National Park Plan

The tensions highlighted above will not only affect how the STS is implemented, but how the Park can be managed in terms of delivering a SD agenda using an adaptive management or learning organisation approach. Many respondents had not seen the Park Plan or Local Development Plan. Two respondents explicitly highlighted the difficulty in clarifying the web of strategies, plans and consultation documents emerging from the CNPA and another two commented on 'over-consultation'. Two respondents felt that it was appropriate for the STS to precede the Park Plan given tourism's importance in the National Park, with one adding that building a Park Plan up from industry-focussed strategy would

prevent the Park Plan being too idealistic and academic. Another five felt that as the STS came first, the onus was on the other strategies and plans to fit in with the STS priorities, actions and visions. *This is at odds with the perspective that it is the Park Plan, not the STS that should provide the principles for action within the CNP.* However, two felt that joined up thinking was not taking place as the Local Plan and Outdoor Access Strategy did not take sufficient account of the work done within the STS. Another two respondents felt that the STS was not connecting with other tourism strategies within the Park area (namely the ABS tourism strategy and Visit Scotland strategies). Only one person mentioned that the STS might have to revise and adapt once other strategies were completed, although another respondent did stress the importance of partnership working and joined up governance in answer to another question *which implied the need for STS and ViSIT Forum to respond and adapt accordingly.* There was some discussion in the interviews about whether some of the required indicators might be provided by other strategies or the Park Plan itself (n = 3). These comments referred to environmental indicators and social indicators (health needs and housing specifically). *Thus, there may need to be more explicit discussion on how sustainable tourism development is integrated with the Park Plan to facilitate joined-up thinking. It is possible that the focus towards the economic viability of the existing tourism industry within the STS is acceptable as the Park Plan and other supporting strategies (with an explicit focus on environmental and/or social issues) will counterbalance this. However, this delegates the responsibility for dealing with conflicting priorities outside the STS, which is of concern and goes against the principles of Europarc. Furthermore, unless issues are explicitly listed within the STS indicator set, there is a danger they will be overlooked.*

8 Conclusion:

The respondents felt the STS was an excellent foundation on which to build and five specifically mentioned that following the Europarc approach was useful. However, this did not stop the respondents providing constructive criticism in a bid to move the process forward. *The key issues brought up when asked to reflect on the process to date were: the approach to sustainable tourism; the 'legitimacy' of ViSIT Forum; and partnership/coordination issues.*

Firstly, there appears to be some difference in opinion between whether the Strategy, and therefore the indicators, should focus on the viability of the tourism industry, with the tacit recognition that this means protecting the special qualities that bring visitors to the Park, or on the impacts of tourism and managing those to ensure that the industry remains viable. We suggest, given the strong support for, and pride in, the Europarc Charter, that the CNPA use their principles, in addition to the Park Plan, to ensure that the appropriate balance between economic, social and environmental issues is retained.

Secondly, there were comments made about the difficulty in engaging stakeholders beyond ViSIT Forum. This raises the question as to whether ViSIT

Forum could act on behalf of the industry and if there were missing voices from the Forum (although efforts to plug these gaps may be difficult in light of consultation fatigue).

Finally, the issue of effective coordination was raised. There is the ongoing challenge of maintaining links with other developing strategies within the Park and run by other agencies. Differences between partners in terms of remit and values (particularly between business-led and small government and public agencies having statutory and moral responsibility to lead) suggest that the current consensus masks issues relating to the potential for conflict.

9 References:

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CNPA (2005) *A Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism*. Report by The Tourism Company, Ledbury

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10 Appendix One: Interview Guide

Q1. What do you understand by the term Sustainable Tourism?

Q2. Following up on theme of Sustainable Tourism, who do you think should be involved in striving to make tourism more sustainable in the CNP?

Q3. We would like to make sure we fully understand the process of developing the Cairngorm National Park strategy for sustainable tourism, the action plan and the suggested indicators – could you explain what you remember about the **process** and to what extent you were involved?

Q4. Do you think the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism provides a good foundation for achieving sustainable tourism in the Cairngorms National Park?

Q5. Do you think the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism integrates with the wider national park plan and other stakeholder plans?

Q6. Moving now to the issue of sustainable tourism indicators, what do you think indicators are for?

Q7. Choosing indicators always requires making decisions over what to include, so what do you think are the most important **aspects** of Sustainable Tourism to monitor using indicators?

Q8. The previous question asked you to think about what aspects of Sustainable Tourism needed to be monitored. This question asks you to think about the practical steps of **implementing** the indicator set to be selected. For example, how should the indicators be monitored? By who? How often?

Q9. Looking at the strategy for Sustainable Tourism, what do you think about the suggested indicators - Are they fit for purpose?

Q10. Do you have any other comments you would like to make on the subject of Sustainable Tourism indicators, or the issues more generally?

Suggested Indicators as provided in the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism (p.59)

Volume and spread of tourism

- Estimates of trips, nights and spending in the region
- Visitor numbers at attractions and main sites (monthly to get indicator of seasonality)
- Monthly occupancy at accommodation (see under enterprise performance)
- Traffic counts at main locations (monthly)
- Number of tourism development projects receiving planning permission (together with number of applications, number called in by CNPA, and outcome)
- Proportion of attractions and activity providers open all year

Visitor satisfaction

- Percentage of visitors satisfied in general and with types of facility / service
- Proportion of repeat visitors
- Number of complaints received

Tourism enterprise performance and satisfaction

- Monthly accommodation occupancy rates and attraction visitor numbers
- Performance increase or decrease compared to previous year
- Number of jobs supported - full time, part time; all year, seasonal
- Proportion of enterprises with quality certification
- Number of enterprises using local produce
- Percentage of enterprises satisfied with CNPA

Community reaction

- Proportion of residents surveyed saying they are happy with tourism levels
- Number of complaints received relating to tourism

Environmental impact

- Amounts raised through visitor payback schemes
- Records of air and water quality
- Levels of litter in key sites
- Proportion of visitors arriving by public transport
- Number of enterprises in Green Tourism Business Scheme
- Number of enterprises taking environmental management measures such as recycling