

NEVIS STRATEGY 2008-13

Introduction

The purpose of the Nevis Partnership is to guide future policies and actions to safeguard, manage and where appropriate enhance the environmental qualities and opportunities for visitor enjoyment and appreciation of the Nevis area.

The first Nevis Strategy was published in October 2001 after detailed consultation. Funding applications to the main partners were made in the spring of 2003, based on a five year plan. Delivery of the agreed objectives and outputs of the Nevis Strategy began with the recruitment of the Nevis Manager in October 2003.

The Nevis Partnership has a board on which the following have nominated Directors: The Highland Council, Fort William Community Council, Inverlochy and Torlundy Community Council, Glen Nevis residents, The John Muir Trust, The Mountaineering Council of Scotland, Lochaber Mountain Access Group, Forestry Commission Scotland and **sportscotland**. Scottish Natural Heritage, Highland and Islands Enterprise and the Highland Council's Lochaber Senior Countryside Ranger are advisors to the board and Bidwells are the landowner's representative for Rio Tinto Alcan. Glen Nevis Holidays Ltd is a member of the Nevis Partnership but have declined to nominate a Director.

After five years of implementing the strategy, the Board decided it was an appropriate time to review it. This was in accord with a review of the work of the Nevis Partnership in 2006 which found that 'the failure to revisit the Nevis Strategy has resulted in an apparent lack of prioritisation of activities on a strategic basis.

The Nevis Strategy 2008-13 is based on a revised appraisal of its current resources and in consideration of potential future income and was prepared with the assistance of Bowles Green, a consultancy working in the tourism and conservation sectors¹. The views of stakeholders (directors, advisers, staff and others) were sought to help identify current strategic priorities for the Partnership.

The overall vision of the Partnership has not changed since the preparation of the original Nevis Strategy and the principles encompassed in the visions and strategic aims of the original strategy are retained, but simplified for a tighter focus, as considered achievable by the outcomes of the consultations and workshops held during the preparation of the strategy.

Aim

The overall aim of the strategy is ***'to facilitate responsible access to the whole of the Nevis Area through integrated management for the benefit of all'***.

Objectives

It has been possible to up-date the main aims and objectives of the original Nevis Strategy to support the past achievements and future ambitions of the Partnership, having reconsidered the issues and the priorities of partners as well as taking into account work in the original Nevis Strategy that has been completed.

¹ For those who are interested this study is available on the Nevis Partnership website.

The original main aims have been re-worked to reflect progress on access work and the high priority attached to influencing events and education raised during the consultation. These and the associated objectives are summarised in Table 1, over.

Table 1: Nevis Strategy 2008-13: Main Objectives

Objectives	Strategies
Environmental management and pathworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proactive measures to protect endangered habitats and species ▪ Native woodlands regeneration ▪ Forestry enhancement programme ▪ River Nevis and catchment management scheme ▪ Glen Nevis entrance – environmental improvements ▪ Archaeological and historic sites programme ▪ Research what requires still to be done and monitor what has already been done ▪ Complete existing footpath projects ▪ Footpath maintenance programme ▪ Litter and refuse management ▪ Wild camping management
Traffic and transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agree and, as appropriate, implement a Traffic Management Policy for Glen Nevis
Visitor management/experience, raising awareness, influencing behaviour, public relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote viewing points outwith the Glen ▪ Other provision subject to Glen Nevis Traffic Management Policy ▪ Obtain complete and reliable data on events ▪ Develop and promote an event organiser's code for Ben Nevis ▪ Improve contact with event organisers ▪ Agree a policy on influencing event organisers ▪ Provide and improve visitor information and orientation ▪ Provide mountain information services to include weather forecasts, access and route details ▪ Ranger-led events and activities ▪ 'Responsible' visitor programme ▪ Nevis identity and sense of place programme ▪ Interpretation programme

Note that as the Partnership is not a Landowner it can only promote support or work with its partners to bring about the first four of these objectives

In addition, to these main objectives in order to create a secure platform to deliver the revised strategy a number of management issues were raised in the consultation and will be addressed. Thus six management objectives are summarised in Table 2 under the headings 'Operational Requirements' and 'Funding'.

Table 2: Nevis Strategy 2008-13: Management Aims and Objectives

Heading	Aim	Objectives
Operational requirements	Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collection of baseline data ▪ Monitoring projects to evaluate performance
	Partnership awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planned public relations campaign aimed at local residents, stakeholders, mountaineering and natural history fraternity
	Planning policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Zoned approach to planning delivered through the existing supplementary planning guidance
	Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Secure accommodation for the Partnership and Partnership activities
Funding	Project funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funding strategy for projects

	Partnership funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funding strategy for core costs
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The Partnership will give urgent attention to its internal affairs, not least:

- its core funding,
- its capacity to manage projects, accommodation for its staff and the activities they undertake; and
- its long term future.

The approach to achieving each of the objectives is outlined below. Action is proposed where there is agreement on policy amongst the Partnership members and where the Partnership can add greater value by working together, as opposed to through delivery by individual members.

Environmental Management and Pathworks

Land and Environmental Management

The objectives of the Partnership in relation to environmental management have not changed since publication of the original Nevis Strategy and so remain, but have been simplified to reflect the re-focussing.

The Partnership does not have specialist land management skills and to acquire them would duplicate the skills of the existing landowning and managing bodies, so a **planning and co-ordination role** is envisaged:

- coordinating the development of environmental projects that involve a number of landowners/managers;
- fundraising for environmental management projects, including woodland regeneration and improving the condition of the curling ponds at the entrance to the Glen;
- coordinating the collection of environmental data and its use to support interpretation for visitors.

Footpath Management

The Partnership is already involved in tackling negative impacts of visitors, particularly through its work on footpath restoration on Ben Nevis. Whilst the Partnership does not have specialist footpath management skills, work of this nature usually involves a number of landowners and organisations and the Partnership is well-placed to **co-ordinate activity**.

The Partnership intends to complete the existing footpath projects, as follows:

- The Nevis Heritage Scheme (including health and safety and liability)
- Outstanding elements of the Ben Nevis Path Mountain Heritage project (summit path, path maintenance support project)

The Partnership will **take a lead** in addressing two urgent issues, which could be achieved through the above:

- Negotiating access agreements with landowners for rangers and field teams to carry out maintenance work on footpaths in the Nevis area

- Bringing land owners and managers together to agree a programme of maintenance work and allocate roles and responsibilities

In addition, the following footpath issues remain outstanding and the Partnership will **take a lead** in addressing them:

- Improving the main tourist track between the Halfway Lochan and the 4,000 foot contour
- Seeking to resolve any conflict relating to the Halfway Lochan path and to where it will lead
- Completing the Allt a Mhuilinn path to the CIC hut
- Repairing the path from the Halfway Lochan to the CIC hut

The longevity of maintenance and repair work could be increased if walkers who currently walk irresponsibly can be encouraged to keep to footpaths. This message will be promoted to visitors through information and interpretation.

Litter and Refuse Management

Litter, wild camping and traffic/parking have also been identified as significant negative impacts. The Partnership will **take a role in helping** to educate visitors to tackle the litter and wild camping problems.

Additional ranger provision will contribute to communication with people seen littering or wild camping, but messages should also be promoted.

Traffic and Transport

Traffic and Parking Management

The original Nevis Strategy contained a number of proposals for managing traffic and parking. However, these vary in their likely impacts on traffic and parking, for example providing an additional car park at the Youth Hostel would increase parking capacity and could encourage more cars, whilst introducing a park and ride could reduce the total number of cars.

In the absence of an agreed policy on traffic and parking, it has not been possible to decide which of the proposed actions to take. In the short term the Partnership will **lead in developing** a Traffic and Parking Policy for the Nevis area and subsequently co-ordinate its delivery.

The Partnership will consider similar schemes elsewhere in the UK and Europe and learn from this experience and draw on the expertise of its partners, in particular the Highland Council.

Visitor Management/Experience, Raising Awareness, Influencing Behaviour, Public Relations

Visitor Provision

There was broad support in the consultation for action to re-instate promotion of places to view Ben Nevis outside of the Partnership area, as a means of reducing unnecessary car journeys into Glen Nevis and disappointment for visitors hoping to view the Ben.

This will be tackled in partnership with the relevant landowners and with the Outdoor Capital of the UK (OCUK), which has an interest in improving the quality of the experience of visitors to the area.

In the longer term, a new, purpose built viewing point for car and coach borne visitors should be created, possibly incorporating commercial development opportunities (catering, retail, etc). Forestry Commission land at Torlundy was suggested during the consultation as a possible site.

Further provision of car parking, showers and toilets for visitors in the Glen has been discussed, but a decision on this will be taken after development of a policy on Traffic Management and no additional facilities are proposed at this stage.

Influencing Events

The Partnership cannot manage or control the planning and organisation of charity events on Ben Nevis, but will **coordinate** the activities of organisations that can influence charity event organisers, by:

- Obtaining data on current activity
- Promoting the events diary system
- Adopting and promoting the Fundraising Institute's code on outdoor events (pending the development of a policy by the Scottish Mountain Access Code)
- Engaging event organisers in dialogue:
 - Making them aware of their responsibilities
 - Providing information to facilitate responsible behaviour
 - Encouraging them to comply with the code
 - Encouraging them to make a contribution to the costs of managing the Nevis area

In the longer term, subject to the impacts of the above activity, the Partnership will consider more radical involvement, for example providing event management services through its trading company.

One way to engage organisers and involve them in this process is to organise a workshop. This could be done as part of the Mountain festival, or the Outdoor Show (which might attract more participants because of its location and the likelihood that many of the organisers attend).

Visitor Information, Interpretation and Education

There is widespread support for the agreed policy on the Partnership's involvement in increasing interpretation for visitors in order to create a 'sense of place'. A project management group has been appointed to take this area forward.

Interpretation for visitors will include the following:

- Management and display of the Mountain Heritage Collection
- Interpretation of environmental data on the Nevis area through appropriate means (print, exhibition, events)
- Identification of self-guided trails (using print and possibly in the longer term, audio) radiating from the visitor centre

The Highland Council has had limited success in attracting participants to its guided walks programme. This is thought to be the result of a combination of factors, not least the profile of visitors to the area, the range of things to do and difficulties encountered with promotion. However, other activities, especially those arranged for families and children have been well attended.

Future provision of events in Glen Nevis will take the form of activity sessions rather than guided walks.

There is potential to increase the level of education activity in the Nevis area and this is recognised as a priority for informing and influencing future generations.

In the short term, the Partnership will **develop** an education project and seek funding for:

- A sheltered space for delivering education activities in the Glen
- Access to minibus transport
- Additional staff time to deliver educational activities
- Consultation with teachers to identify specific learning needs
- Developing educational visits to meet current/actual needs

A wider education project has been proposed and discussed in outline by the Partnership, in response to changing education policy. At the moment, the Partnership cannot develop a strategy on education in the long term as it has no policy on the wider project. A feasibility study will be undertaken at an early opportunity to inform this process. The study should consider existing provision, demand and trends.

Evidence from elsewhere shows that visitors are more likely to react positively to messages promoted by charitable organisations than local or national governmental organisations. The Partnership will **encourage and promote** responsible access to users of the Nevis area.

It will do this through raising awareness, for example, through

- its website,
- the proposed 'Friends Group',
- messages delivered to walkers at car parks and
- messages in promotional materials for the OCUK.

Messages will encourage responsible walking (such as keeping to footpaths, avoiding trampling vegetation or damaging young trees), taking litter home and using recognised campsites.

Actions

The table below summarises the strategy. Specific actions have been developed as part of the business planning process, and, a clear mandate is required from the Board to the Management Team to take the strategies forwards within the time framework proposed below. Note that definitive timescales have not been applied in view of the changing policy and funding context. However, as a guide, definition of short, medium and long term are as follows:

- Short term – immediate projects to work on now
- Medium term – projects to pick up in a 2-5 year horizon
- Long term – 5 years and beyond

Table 3: Action Plan for the Nevis Strategy 2008-13: Delivering the Main Objectives

Strategy	Short Term Actions	Medium Term Actions	Longer Term Actions	Measures
Environmental management and pathworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve environment at Curling ponds ▪ Continue archaeological and historic sites research ▪ Identify research and monitoring needs and plan programme ▪ Complete current footpath repair projects ▪ Negotiate access agreements with landowners for footpath maintenance ▪ Agree a programme of footpath maintenance ▪ Increased level of ranger patrols 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prepare SRDP funding bid for woodland regeneration ▪ Plan River Nevis and catchment management scheme ▪ On-going maintenance ▪ Complete outstanding footpath repairs ▪ Include behaviour messages in interpretive material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Co-ordinate development of further environmental management projects ▪ On-going maintenance ▪ Include information on wild camping in revisions of guidebooks and on signage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hectares of land regenerated ▪ Improved perceptions ▪ Length of footpath improved. ▪ Length of footpath maintained ▪ Reduced litter levels
Traffic and parking management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agree a traffic and parking policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ TBA
Visitor management/experience, raising awareness, influencing behaviour, public relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Obtain data on current activities ▪ Promote Fundraising Institute code for outdoor charity events ▪ Agree policy and plan event influencing project ▪ Implement already agreed interpretation proposals ▪ Review events programme ▪ Feasibility study for education project ▪ Consultation with teachers to inform education provision/requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work with partners (OCUK, Highland Council) to develop and promote out of area view points ▪ Implement project, including engaging event organisers, developing the diary, promoting codes, encouraging donations to the Nevis area ▪ Link scientific research in the Nevis area to interpretation activities ▪ Develop a basic education space in the Glen ▪ Include behaviour messages in interpretive material 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of viewpoints ▪ Number of people using viewpoints ▪ Visitor satisfaction ▪ Number of cars in Glen Nevis ▪ Reduced negative impacts of events including disruption, litter, etc ▪ Number of event participants ▪ Number of publications distributed/sold ▪ Increased awareness and understanding of the Nevis area ▪ Number of education visits ▪ Feasibility study completed ▪ Reduced litter levels ▪ Reduced trampling of vegetation ▪ Reduced erosion of footpaths

Note that as the Nevis Partnership is not a Landowner it can only promote, support or work with its partners to bring about the objectives.

Table 4: Action Plan for the Nevis Strategy 2008-13: Delivering the Management Objectives

	Strategy	Short Term Actions	Medium Term Actions	Longer Term Actions	Measures
Operational requirements	Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify existing data ▪ Identify gaps ▪ Develop data collection programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On-going data collection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On-going data collection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Projects monitored ▪ Data communicated to visitors/residents
	Partnership awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Produce communications plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resource and deliver communications programme 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased awareness and support
	Planning policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to implement planning policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to implement planning policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to implement planning policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Success of policy
	Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Include accommodation needs in education feasibility study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review accommodation needs in light of education feasibility study 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is accommodation fit for purpose?
Funding	Project funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Set up friends group ▪ Appoint professional fundraiser ▪ Work with OCUK to develop the visitor payback scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore expanding and improving the existing car parking donation scheme ▪ Explore additional core funding opportunities (especially through SRDP) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Turnover
	Partnership funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agree SLA with Highland Council ▪ Agree business plan with SNH 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore additional core funding opportunities (especially through SRDP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore radical funding methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Security of Partnership (financial projection)