
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at The Duke of Gordon Hotel, Kingussie on Friday 13th February 2004 at 1.30pm

PRESENT

Peter Argyle	Eleanor Mackintosh
Eric Baird (Chairing the Meeting)	Anne MacLean
Stuart Black	Alastair MacLennan
Duncan Bryden	Andrew Rafferty
Sally Dowden	Gregor Rimell
Basil Dunlop	David Selfridge
Douglas Glass	Robert Severn
Angus Gordon	Joyce Simpson
Mrs Lucy Grant	Sheena Slimon
David Green	Richard Stroud
Bruce Luffman	Susan Walker

In Attendance:

Norman Brockie
Murray Ferguson
Nick Halfhide
Jane Hope
Kristin Scott
Debbie Strang

Apologies:

William McKenna
Andrew Thin
Bob Wilson

Welcome and Introduction

1. Eric Baird (in the Chair in the absence of Andrew Thin) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Minutes of Last Meeting – approval

2. The minutes of the previous meeting (16th January) were approved with no changes.

Matters Arising

3. None

"Celebrating Life in the Park" Events (oral update)

4. Nick Halfhide reminded Members of the paper they had discussed and agreed at the Board meeting on the 5th December 2003 which had proposed a series of events and activities at a community level to mark the opening of the Park. Given that these events would have a high local profile, it was important to keep the Board informed of progress even though some of the detail was still being formulated. Members had made a number of comments on the proposals, and in response to those, the sub-group (Lucy Grant, Bob Wilson, Nick Halfhide, Maureen Ferrier) had made a number of changes. The most significant of these was to refocus the events and activities away from celebrating the opening of the Park to celebrating all aspects of life within it.
5. The three main areas of activity would be:
 - a) A grant scheme for community events and activities;
 - b) A poetry and photographic competition leading to the production of a Calendar for 2005;
 - c) Encouragement to all sports, recreation, art and culture groups to reach out to other parts of the Park.
6. The focus in the grants scheme would be on events and projects that:
 - a) Were of limited duration and completed within the timescale of the scheme;
 - b) Involved a number of people as organisers or participants;
 - c) Were related to some aspect of the National Park and its aims, particularly the natural and cultural heritage;
 - d) Had some form of continuing impact or result after the event had taken place.
7. Grants of between £500 and £3,000 would be made available for activities taking place between March and September. The CNPA would expect to make between 30 and 50 grants.
8. Although the CNPA would not wish to be prescriptive, it was intended that there would be some guidance given on the type of activity which would be eligible. Examples included:
 - a) A performance, play or concert relating to the National Park and its aims;
 - b) Collaborative creation of a work of art, or book;

- c) A sporting event or competition, particularly one that had an "across the park" aspect, or which used the recreational resources of the Park;
 - d) A group activity relating to the natural or cultural environment, such as habitat improvement, path works, undertaking a census of wildlife, or restoration of a historic or cultural site.
9. For the competition, the aim was to run the poetry section through the schools, while the photographic section would be open. The theme would be "Celebrating Life in the Cairngorms". The CNPA was consulting with education authorities, camera clubs and others over the best timings for the competitions, and currently the hope was to hold both during March and April.
10. The necessary preparations were currently well advanced, and the hope was to launch both the competition and the grant scheme in early March, subject to the successful conclusion of funding arrangements and approval from the Scottish Executive.
11. In discussion the following points were made:
- a) There was a strategy for publicising these events.
 - b) A simple application form was being developed that would ensure enough information was provided for an audit trail, without being unduly burdensome for the applicant.
 - c) The idea was being considered of producing either a book or an exhibition of all the photos submitted to the competition and making this available more widely.

12. The Board noted with approval the oral update on progress.

Park Gateways and Information Working Group: Report Back (paper 1)

13. Nick Halfhide introduced the paper which informed the Board of the work of this group, sought their approval for the group's purpose, short-term outputs and for expenditure on external consultancy for entry point signage. The group had met twice, and was due to meet again the following week. Bob Wilson had agreed to chair, and the group was seeking to involve representatives from the area Tourist Boards, Rangers and visitor attractions. Other representatives would be invited to the group in due course should it become apparent that particular sector of expertise was missing.
14. In discussing the purpose and short-term outputs, the group took the view that it should focus its immediate attentions on entry point signage to the Park whilst considering more generally, what, where and how further public information was required. The group did not think that the consideration of facilities other than signage at the entry points was a priority. To take forward the entry point signage, tenders had been sought for work to consider and justify options for the siting and design and consider planning, funding, and on-going maintenance issues. This report would allow the working group to report back to the Board with detailed proposals by the end of April. The working group was at the same time working on the public information report and aimed to report back to the Board also by the end of April.

15. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) The use of consultants to advise on entry point signage was welcome. There was general agreement that work on entry point signage should be a priority.
- b) Proposals for work on information provision were relatively narrow in relation to the broader issue which needed to be tackled in a joined-up fashion, and in particular needed to be related to work which had been started by the Tourism Development Working Group with the American Professor Sam Ham. Professor Ham had spent a week running workshops for Park Board Members and others in the Park area which proposed a thematic way of developing an interpretive strategy for the whole Park. This emphasised the need to look at developing such a strategy from the bottom up, and on the basis of exactly what one was trying to do (e.g. changing behaviour, providing information, etc). In addition the work of the Tourism Development Working Group in developing a Brand was moving forward rapidly. The intention was that Sam Ham should return to the National Park in September to help develop the Interpretive Strategy for the whole Park. It was vital that this work was properly joined up with any work that the Park Gateways Group intended to do on information provision. The work on information provision was too important to rush.
- c) A strategy was needed to link information provision, branding, and interpretation.
- d) Main entry points to the Park were defined simply at this stage as roads crossing the boundary and railway stations within the Park. The work was focusing purely on signage at the boundary and did not cover signs on the approach to the Park.
- e) The consultant was expected to advise the working group on the major issues arising from decisions on entry point signage, for example the kinds of signs that were possible, issues to be considered on the siting, etc. These would be narrowed down to form a set of proposals to be put to the working group, and eventually to the Board. It was acknowledged that there were many other sources of expertise within the Park that could be tapped into, for example Aberdeenshire had a signposting policy officer, and there were individuals within the National Park with experience of developing policies on signposting. It was also important to tap into thinking done by the Tourism Development Working Group. The consultant had indeed been made aware of the need to liaise closely with the Tourism Development Working Group and its outputs, and particularly its work on branding. The members of the Gateways Group should note these points made about membership and liaison with other working groups.
- f) It was suggested that Board Members should make a point of taking part in the next series of workshops run by Sam Ham, probably in the autumn.

16. The paper was agreed subject to the comments made above, and in particular;

- a) The Board approved expenditure of £12,000 on the first phase of the entry point signage project;**
- b) The information element of the work being done by the working group would be preparatory only, as further development of this work would need to be done in close liaison with the work coming out of the Tourism Development Working Group.**

17. Action:

- a) **The Park Gateways and Information Working Group to report back to the Board in April.**

Local Plan Working Group: Progress Report (paper 2)

18. Norman Brockie introduced the paper which gave the first progress report of the group to the CNPA Board. The Local Plan Working Group had met four times, with Peter Argyle in the Chair. There were currently six Board Members on the group and a number of other stakeholders had been brought on to the group. The group membership was developing slowly, with just the principal stakeholders involved so far, and concentrating mainly on the statutory process. It was recognised that membership would be widened as the process of developing the Local Plan, and its consultation process, was taken forward.
19. Norman Brockie drew attention to a recent meeting at which Scottish Water had reported on its proposed programme of infrastructure development between 2006 - 2014. The programme covered the upgrading of existing water and sewage capacity but made no provision for extending it (except in Aviemore). Nine communities were already at capacity. This was a serious and major constraint for the Local Plan for the area. The Scottish Executive would be consulting on this programme, but Norman Brockie suggested that it might be more constructive for the CNPA to pre-empt this and discuss the problem with the Scottish Executive in advance of this consultation. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) The water and sewerage infrastructure constraints were serious. The Convenor should seek an urgent meeting with the Convenor of Scottish Water to discuss the issue. In addition it was noted that Scottish Water, SEPA and the National Park Authority were all NDPBs sponsored by the Environment Group of the Scottish Executive. It was suggested that a meeting should take place at official level to draw attention to the problem with the Scottish Executive. A meeting with Ministers may be needed in due course, given the seriousness of the issue. The role of the Highland Council should also be recognised, and they should be included in such meetings.
 - b) The issue of the infrastructure constraints on house building were not simply a matter of providing more water. Measures for conserving existing supplies of water should also be looked at.
 - c) It was noted that sewerage disposal rather than water supply was the main constraint. The consequence of this was that planning gain might have to be directed to paying for sewerage disposal rather than affordable housing. The point was made that while this might be acceptable for a large development, it did not really work for small numbers of houses. Such an arrangement in effect mitigated against affordable housing.
 - d) The constraints imposed by the water and sewerage supply were the single most important issue for the National Park and meetings were needed at the highest level. Unless something was done, the processes of providing affordable housing,

the National Park Plan and the Local Plan could be seriously undermined. There were many ramifications to this problem.

- e) The membership of the group was questioned. While it was recognised that the group had so far been concerned mainly with process, it was vital that the membership of such a group was wide. In particular it was noted there was no input from business on the group. The intention had been to keep the group small and compact in the early stages, and the membership was certainly not fixed. The intention was to bring in people as the process continued who could make a constructive contribution. However, it had to be recognised that very large groups were not always very efficient at developing workable plans. It was intended to include people on the group who were able to represent the economic drivers in the area.
- f) Comments about the negative impact of particular developments needed to be made with care when they were matters of opinion rather than statement of fact. The comment in paragraph 23 about Aviemore was a case in point.
- g) There was a vigorous discussion about the best way of developing the membership of working groups, and the best way of bringing in external expertise and experience. It was recognised that it was up to each working group to find the best approach suited to that particular group, as there was no single model. Nevertheless, it was clearly important to ensure that outside expertise and experience was brought in, and was brought in at a fairly early stage. There were dangers in allowing preconceived ideas about the way people would want to work and be consulted to determine the decisions made on narrowing the membership of a working group. There was a balance to be struck between keeping a group small enough to expedite a particular piece of work, and widening the group to ensure that it was able to tap into appropriate expertise and experience.
- h) There was a real concern in the area over consultation fatigue. There had been many consultations in the past leading up to the formation of the National Park. The CNPA now had in prospect three new consultations (Local Plan, National Park Plan, Core Path Network). It would be important to streamline these consultation exercises. The relevant officials were well aware of this problem and had been discussing it for some time, and had been meeting as a group to look at how best to engage with communities in a way which was useful to them. This would not be easy because the three statutory consultations were on different timescales. Nevertheless, the point was well made and was recognised, and officials were looking closely at how best to deal with this. N.Brockie reported that two Community Liaison Co-ordinators would be employed to engage with communities, encourage greater participation, and organise much of the consultation process.

20. The paper was agreed subject to the comments made above.

21. Action:

- a) Officials to seek meeting with Scottish Water, SEPA, and Scottish Executive to discuss the infrastructure constraints;**

- b) Convenor to seek a meeting with the Chair of Scottish Water.**

Access Working Group: Oral Report (oral report)

22. Kristin Scott gave an oral update on progress of the Access Working Group. The working group had met three times. Its initial membership comprised six Board Members, and was chaired by Joyce Simpson. The group had two main functions:
- a) To produce a report to the Board on proposals for membership and structure of one or more access forums set up under the terms of the Land Reform Act, to cover the CNP area; and
 - b) To produce a report to the Board setting out detailed proposals for an initial core path network.
23. The establishment of one or more access forums, and the proposals for a core path network, were both statutory functions for access authorities under the terms of the Land Reform Act. The CNPA would take on these functions once the Land Reform Act took effect, but there were also two further requirements. First, procedural guidance to access authorities needed to be approved by Scottish Ministers and the Scottish Parliament and secondly, the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) needed to be approved by Scottish Ministers and the Scottish Parliament. The procedural guidance to access authorities would be published soon and be subject to a twelve week consultation. The Access Working Group would draft a response to this consultation. The SOAC had now been revised following a consultation and it was now available in the form of a proposed SOAC. Once the SOAC and the procedural guidance was approved, the CNPA would be able to take up its duties as an access authority.
24. Both SNH and access authorities were under a statutory duty to publicise the SOAC. The working group would be looking into how the CNPA could best publicise the code and promote responsible behaviour. The working group was currently developing thinking on one or more local access forums within the National Park and would report back to the Board with proposals in due course.
25. In discussion the following points were made:
- a) Members were encouraged to read the updated SOAC and the accompanying report on the consultation process. This would highlight the changes which had been made to the SOAC, albeit these were not major.
 - b) Additional resources for implementing the access provisions of the Land Reform Act would be needed by access authorities, and these had been taken into account by the CNPA in its Corporate Plan and associated three year budget, submitted to Scottish Ministers in December 2003.
 - c) A good working relationship with the neighbouring access authorities would be important, and officials were already in touch. The report to the Board by the Access Working Group would give further details.

26. The Board noted the oral update, with thanks.

27. Action:

- a) **Access Working Group to provide written report to the next Board Meeting.**

Producing a Sustainable Tourism Strategy (paper 3)

28. Debbie Strang introduced the paper which was a follow up to the Tourism Development Working Group's first paper to the Board (paper 1, 16th January 2004). This had identified the key issues for tourism in the Cairngorms, one of which had been the production of a Sustainable Tourism Strategy. The current paper sought the Board's approval for expenditure on a consultancy project to take this work forward. This was a readily definable piece of work, and which would benefit from expertise and experience which was currently not available within the CNPA itself. The proposal was that the project would be managed by the lead officer and a sub-group of the Tourism Development Working Group. Approval was sought for a guide price of between £15,000 and £20,000 for the consultancy. This compared favourably with the cost of projects started elsewhere in England which had been nearly double this amount. This favourable price was largely a result of the fact that the CNPA had commissioned an earlier report from Europarc Consulting outlining actions required by the Park Authority for work towards the implementing the Charter. The consultancy was therefore seen as providing good value for money.

29. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) While the project was focused on looking at the delivery of Sustainable Tourism with the Park, it would be important to also look at how sustainable tourism could deliver the other aims of the National Park. The steering group should therefore be constructed to ensure appropriate cross membership with other groups.
- b) The Tourism Development Working Group could be accused of being biased towards tourism businesses. It could be argued that the group should include people with different perspectives. However, it was recognised that the TDWG already had a wide membership. Further, 80% or more of businesses within the Park were tourism related. However the TDWG would be happy to consider suggestions for widening its membership still further.
- c) In pulling together a list of possible consultants for this work, efforts had been made to ensure local firms were invited to bid.
- d) Following a meeting of the Audit Committee that morning, the importance of cost benefit analysis for projects such as this was emphasised. While this could sometimes be difficult to do, an attempt must always be made to articulate both the costs and the benefits of a piece of work. This had been done in the case of the consultancy for the Sustainable Tourism Strategy. On the wider point, officials noted the importance of developing a formal structure for cost benefit analysis for projects, and would be meeting the following week to discuss this. Further, it was pointed out that the small grants which would be given out as part of the "Celebrating Life in the Park" events would be made subject to a formal cost benefit analysis.
- e) In response to a question as to whether the Sustainable Tourism Strategy would commit the CNPA to ongoing costs, two points were made. First, the Sustainable

Tourism Charter was not for individual businesses, but would be for the National Park as a whole. Secondly, the only recurring costs would be once every five years, when the five year action plan (which was part of the strategy) was verified. That cost would be in the region of £3,000.

30. The paper was agreed and the expenditure on commissioning a consultant approved.

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31. Members felt it would be useful to have a table showing future meetings of working groups and committees so that Members were aware of dates in advance of meetings taking place. Officers undertook to circulate such lists.
32. Members attention was drawn to a new "What's On" guide to the whole of the National Park, which has been produced by the area Tourist Boards. The guide would be available to guests who visited the National Park.
33. Members attention was drawn to two events coming up which related to disability awareness.
 - a) There was disability awareness training for all Board Members on Friday 27th February, in the afternoon following the Planning Committee meeting at Ballater.
 - b) The Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce had arranged a seminar given by the Disability Rights Commission on the implications for business of the Disability Discrimination Act. This would be on the 3rd March at around 11.30 am at the Aviemore Hilton. This was a precursor to an all day seminar in Inverness on the 22nd March.
34. The CNPA would be attending a meeting with the Standards Commission and others on the 18th February. This meeting was to try and resolve the current difficulty for Board Members who were also councillors, and who were being advised that they had to withdraw from discussion within their council on any planning application which the CNPA had already commented on (even if those councillors had withdrawn from that CNPA discussion). The intention of the meeting was to discuss with the Standards Commission whether they could amend their guidance on this subject.
35. A meeting had been held on the 11th February at Carrbridge on integrated risk management planning in respect of fire. There would be a further consultation later in the year, and Angus Gordon was currently sitting on the local working group to consider this and would keep the CNPA informed.
36. Members were reminded about the formal opening of the Ballater office on 20 February. A small event was being held to raise the profile locally of the existence of the office, and the fact that the planning team were based there. The opening would be conducted by Mike Rumbles, MSP.

37. The Board was given an update on the deer cull at Glenfeshie. Sue Walker declared an interest as a member of the Deer Commission Scotland (DCS), and reported that the DCS, the Glenfeshie Estate and a neighbouring estate had held an extremely productive meeting in the previous week. The emergency cull conducted under Section 10 of the Deer (Scotland) Act which started on 29th January had finished on the 31st January. The estate was now taking the lead in the further cull that was required to comply with the Section 7 Agreement. The important point was that the estate was in the lead on this, and the cull was being taken forward by the estate in collaboration with the neighbouring estate and with the advice and support of the Deer Commission of Scotland. A further meeting had also taken place between the estate, its neighbour and the DCS which was looking to the future, and how the deer population could be managed without the future use of Emergency Powers.

Date of Next Meeting

38. 12th March at Strathdon (Lonach Hall)