

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit Committee

Held at Ben Mhor Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey
On Friday 17 December 2004, 9.30 am

Present

Eric Baird (Chair)
Duncan Bryden
Sally Dowden

Sheena Slimon
Bob Wilson

In Attendance

Jane Hope
David Cameron

Andy Rinning
Bob Clark, Audit Scotland

Apologies

None

Welcome

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that there were no apologies.

Election of Chair

2. Eric Baird was nominated by Sally Dowden to serve as Chair of the Committee for a further year. This was seconded by Sheena Slimon. There being no other nominations, Eric Baird was duly appointed Chair of the Committee for a further year.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 13 August 2004 at Logie Coldstone Hall were approved without amendment.

Matters Arising

4. There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

External Auditor's Report on the 2003/04 Audit (Paper 1)

5. In introducing his report, Bob Clark outlined the structure which the report was required to take and his own responsibilities as external auditor, as had been set out on page 2 of the report.

6. Bob Clark highlighted that there were no qualifications made to his report on the Authority's accounts and that they presented a true and fair view of the financial position and income and expenditure for the year.
7. The external auditor drew members' attention to the Statement on the System of Internal Controls and the actions taken since March 2004, in particular the appointment of internal auditors and holding a risk management workshop. He concluded that the Authority's Statement complies with extant guidance and was consistent with other information of which he was aware from his audit.
8. The external audit of Governance arrangements had also concluded that there were satisfactory internal controls in this area.
9. Audit recommendations on establishing a timetable to bring forward the closure of the Authority's accounts to October and in progressing compliance with and monitoring of the Freedom of Information Act would be followed up as part of the 2004/05 audit.
10. The Chair thanked Bob Clark for this outline of his report. In response to a question on the priority of audit recommendations made, Bob Clark clarified that these were medium, rather than high, priority.
11. In discussing the impact of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, due to become effective from 1 January 2005, members noted that an update to staff training would be required in the new year, while protocols for disclosure of other organisations' information and monitoring of FOI requests were in progress. These protocols would be implemented for the 1 January 2005 effective date.
12. Members of the Committee agreed that guidance would be welcomed on FOI and making appropriate responses to information requests. It would be helpful if this could incorporate advice on use of email.
13. **Action: issue guidance to all Board members on operation of Freedom of Information Act, making appropriate responses to information requests and best practice with regard to email records.**
14. **The Committee agreed to accept the report presented by Audit Scotland on the 2003/04 accounts and to endorse the action plan set out in the report.**

Risk Management Strategy (Paper 2)

15. The Committee considered the report updating progress on the development of the Authority's Risk Register and Risk Management Strategy.
16. Following discussion of the issues set out in the paper, the Committee:
 - a) **Noted that a Risk Management workshop had been undertaken in November 2004 and a range of strategic risks identified.**
 - b) **Noted that the Management Team would receive a future report on the Authority's Risk Register, following receipt of the final report and**

underpinning information from Deloitte and further analysis of the results of the workshop by the Head of Corporate Services.

- c) Agreed that the Risk Management Strategy should be submitted to its next meeting for consideration.**

- 17. Action: submit paper on Risk Management Strategy to Audit Committee in March 2005.**

Monitoring Officer, Proper Officer and Accountable Officer Responsibilities (Paper 3)

18. In introducing the paper, David Cameron drew members attention to paragraph 9 of the paper which should begin “The Proper Officer” and not “The Monitoring Officer” as stated. The paper itself presented a review and update of arrangements for discharge of the responsibilities of Monitoring Officer, Proper Officer and provision of cover for the Accountable Officer of the Authority.
19. In response to a question on the period over which the Head of Corporate Services would expect to act on behalf of the Accountable Officer in the event of a temporary period of unavailability, officers clarified that this arrangement would only be put in place for periods of up to two or three weeks of leave or absence through illness. It was anticipated that the Board would act to put alternate arrangements in place should a longer period of absence be anticipated.
- 20. The Committee agreed:**
- a) The appointment of the Chief Executive as the Monitoring Officer for the Authority.**
 - b) The appointment of the Head of Corporate Services as the Proper Officer for the Authority.**
 - c) That the Head of Corporate Services be given the authority to act on behalf of the Accountable Officer in the event of any temporary period of unavailability.**

Fraud Policy and Response Procedure (Paper 4)

21. The Committee considered a proposed Fraud Policy and Response Procedure which had been drawn up by the Head of Corporate Services for consideration.
22. In response to an invitation from the Chair to comment on the proposed policy and procedure, Bob Clark confirmed that the proposed arrangements appeared acceptable.
- 23. The Committee approved the adoption of the Fraud Policy and Response Procedure for the Authority.**

Any Other Business

24. The Chair invited members to consider how the Committee might make a proactive contribution to the activities of the Authority. He raised that the Committee might consider something along the lines of the Social, Ethical and Environmental Audit produced by Guardian Newspapers Ltd. Officers noted that a “Green Audit” of the

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Authority's activities had been conducted in the last few months and the final report was awaited.

- 25. Members agreed that this would represent an appropriate course of action for the Committee to pursue.**
- 26. Action: circulate copies of the Guardian Audit to members prior to the next Committee meeting.**
- 27. Action: present a paper summarising the outcome of the Green Audit undertaken to the next meeting of the Committee.**
28. Members suggested that there may be some role in considering the effectiveness of the Authority's actions in delivering its Corporate Plan. For example, there may be a role in reviewing partnership agreements or considering project by project expenditure to allow analysis and monitoring of delivery. There may be an appropriate role in considering the delivery of larger projects and the Committee should consider the type of project it would wish to look at and establish criteria to be considered by the Committee in such a review.
- 29. The Committee agreed the need to explore further the role and remit of the Committee, within the context of the balance between a Board level review of activities and Executive responsibility for delivery.**

Date of Next Meeting

30. 24 March 2005, at a venue to be confirmed within the Grantown area.