
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at the Community Hall, Boat of Garten on Friday 22nd January 2010 at 11.30am

PRESENT

Peter Argyle	Mary McCafferty
Eric Baird (part of meeting)	Eleanor Mackintosh
Stuart Black	Anne MacLean
Geva Blackett	Alastair MacLennan
Duncan Bryden	William McKenna
Jaci Douglas	Fiona Murdoch
Dave Fallows	Andrew Rafferty
Lucy Grant	Gregor Rimell
David Green(Convener)	Richard Stroud
Drew Hendry	Sue Walker
Bob Kinnaird	

In Attendance:

David Cameron	Andy Rinning
Pete Crane	Andy Rockall
Murray Ferguson	Claire Ross
Bob Grant	Frances Thin
Matthew Hawkins	John Thorne
Jane Hope	

Apologies:

Marcus Humphrey
Ian MacKintosh

Welcome and Introduction

1. David Green welcomed everyone to the first Board meeting in 2010 with good wishes for the New year.

Minutes of Last Meeting – approval

2. The minutes of the previous meeting (30th October 2009) were approved subject to some minor editorial changes.

Matters Arising

3. Murray Ferguson gave members an update on the management arrangements for the Speyside Way (considered as Paper 2 at the previous meeting). Negotiations with the Highland Council were still underway and a positive discussion at the Council's Planning, Development and Environment Committee had been held very recently. The emerging solution appeared to be that the CNPA would fund day to day maintenance and infrastructure upgrades; discussions were continuing on a partnership arrangement for dealing with insurance and risk assessment, and liaison with land managers over formal agreements; further advice was being sought on shared responsibility on these issues. On the ranger-related issues, Highland Council were content to take the lead. Progress was being made; a paper would be brought back to the Finance Committee on the 19th February. It was noted that these emerging arrangements were still financially more attractive to the CNPA than the previous arrangements.

Declarations of Interest

4. None.

The Role of Training and the Delivery of the National Plan (Paper 1)

5. Claire Ross introduced the paper which considered how the CNPA should take forward its role in the development of training within the Park, building on the significant success of the Land Based Business Training Project (LBBT) and Cairngorms Awareness and Pride (CAP) Projects. Both projects had been recently evaluated, and with the current funding arrangements from ESF and LEADER due to come to an end in the foreseeable future, it was timely to consider how best this project could be taken forward in the longer term. The paper recognised the importance of retaining the link with land based businesses given their importance in the delivery of the National Park Plan. But the review, and the funding pressures, made clear the need for the projects to focus on where there were training needs. The review had also highlighted the importance of working with other agencies in developing training within the Park, to avoid duplication and also seek synergies.
6. The Board was specifically asked to consider the proposed themes for the project as set out in table 1, and the set of guiding principles set out in Paragraph 15 for developing the project in the future. A further paper would then be brought to the Finance Committee once proposals had been further developed on the basis of the Board's input.
7. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) The LBBT Project had been one of the most tangible benefits flowing from the creation of the National Park, and one of the most appreciated. It was important not to lose those benefits; it was also important that those who had appreciated the project over the previous six years saw the changes as positive.
 - b) The ultimate benefits from the projects were long term. Unfortunately it would prove very difficult to measure such long term impacts and it was probably best to accept the impossibility of this and find other ways of assessing the project's success.
 - c) There was discussion surrounding the value of the LBBT in having been able to provide training directly in response to a request from a business with a training need. On the other hand, there had to be a focus on a limited number of

training programmes in order to secure funding from other partners who would be looking for particular outputs. The principle at Paragraph 15(d) recognised the need to be providing training that was responding to what was needed. There was also a need to balance what was delivered by the LBBT and what was best delivered by others. So there was a difficult balance to be struck between providing a filter, and responding to needs – these two were not mutually exclusive. It was noted that businesses would be driven by the need for efficiency and productivity and these should feature in the thinking behind the design of the future LBBT courses.

- d) Clearly the future LBBT could not provide unlimited training, but it would be helpful to point enquiries at other sources of training. Similarly, where a need was identified more generally that LBBT could not supply, it ought to be possible to flag up this identified need to other training providers even if the LBBT could not satisfy that need.
- e) While responding to demand was clearly a good way of ensuring that training was satisfying a need, it ought to also be possible to take a more strategic approach with other training providers and agencies, to try and identify needs in advance.
- f) In considering other training providers, it was important to include private sector as well as public sector.
- g) Training should not be considered in too narrow a fashion. There was a certain amount of work going on within SEARs with Best Practice events being put on by, for example, the Deer Commission. There was therefore an opportunity to bring this sort of grouping together to get a strategic overview of what agencies saw as being the training needs that they should satisfy. This approach should not just extend to the usual partners, but be more outward looking. In this respect it was noted that training was not necessarily “chalk and talk” in the classroom style but should be extended to all sorts of other ways of developing skills.
- h) Other aspects of moving forward with the LBBT included the desire to maximise the uptake of delivery of training within the Park, regardless of who was providing that training and in so doing raise the profile of the National Park.
- i) It was important to identify where there were training gaps and where no provider was filling that gap, this would indicate a possible focus for the LBBT.
- j) Paragraph 15(h) referred to the intangible benefits that have proved invaluable in the past, such as networking opportunities, that arise from bringing people together on training courses. There was some discussion about how these intangible benefits could be assessed. Currently, these were picked up through the feedback and monitoring forms.
- k) Training should not stand alone but should be linking with other initiatives. For example, allotments training had obvious links with related activities to do with how food was used e.g. preserving.
- l) In Table 1 under Theme 3(c) about the Planning System, the wording might be better rephrased as “understanding the Planning System”.
- m) Training was an essential element of delivering the Inclusion agenda. This was not just about how to make training accessible, using accessible venues, and treating people properly, but was also about recognising how training could help people to lead more independent lives. The template that had been developed by the CNPA for community engagement for ensuring accessibility, might usefully be adopted by the training programme.

- n) To accommodate the tension between fewer resources, the need to respond to the “bottom-up” approach, and the need to seek funding from partners who would only be interested were being addressed, all pointed to the need for a very clear framework for this project in the future.
 - o) Annex I which set out the Strategic Objectives in the National Park Plan under Learning and Understanding, highlighted the objective of ensuring that people across Scotland are aware of the Cairngorms National Park and understand why it is worth investing in. The point was made that the future training programme might need to consider the question of how to reach people beyond the Park to get the message across the Cairngorms National Park.
 - p) On the basis that courses were beneficial to businesses, it was not unreasonable that businesses should be prepared to pay for some proportion of the costs (as indeed was the case in some instances at the moment).
 - q) In practice there was a variety of ways in which the CNPA could deliver its role in training: funding and supporting individuals on training; signposting people to the appropriate training source; becoming involved in developing the content of training days delivered by others. All these were options and the CNPA probably needed to remain flexible in this respect.
8. The Convener summed up by recognising how highly valued the LBBT had been over the past six years and reiterating that the CNPA did not want to lose these benefits and the good relationships that had resulted. However, because of so many issues that needed to be balanced, as identified in the previous discussion, it was essential to have a very clear framework. Particular points to bear in mind were that we needed to look for new partners rather than the usual suspects, and to consider private as well as public and voluntary sector partners; to consider new areas of training; to measure and take account of the intangible benefits when designing courses. The next steps should be that a proposal for developing the project should be worked up to the extent that the Finance Committee could give approval for a provisional funding allocation as a basis for Project Officers to then engage in discussions with potential funding partners. But given the clear interest of the Board, and the importance of the project, the final proposal would come back to the Board for approval.
9. **The Board approved the recommendations of the paper as follows:**
- a) **Approved the key training themes identified in Table I as the basis for further developmental work with partners;**
 - b) **Approved the guiding principles identified in Paragraph 15 as a steer to staff in taking forward the training agenda within the Park.**
10. **Action:**
- a) **Outline proposal to be taken to the Finance Committee on 19th February for approval of a funding allocation within the CNPA budget which would allow officers to work with partners to put together a total funding package;**
 - b) **To bring the fully worked up proposal to the Board for final approval.**

CNPA Transport Policy (Paper 2)

11. John Thorne introduced the paper which laid out the CNPA's transport actions to date in relation to the National Park Plan and Corporate Plan objectives. The Board was asked to note the actions to date and the review that had been undertaken of these with partners and colleagues. The results of that review were set out in the annex to the paper. The paper suggested that while the Heather Hopper Bus Service had received a high profile and been publicly popular the evidence over four years was showing a decline in the number of travellers and a consequent increase in the total cost per traveller which in 2009 was £78. There was a strong argument for not continuing the funding to the Heather Hopper and the Highland and Aberdeenshire Councils as co-funders were of the view that the Heather Hopper should be discontinued if all three partners agreed. The views of the Board were sought on this question. The proposal was that there were other alternatives that were more cost effective uses for this funding.
12. The Cairngorms Explorer provided a unique timetable for transport in the Park as well as delivering many Park messages. Hitrans and Nestrans had contributed until 2008 and the Explorer was now 100% CNPA funded. The Finance Committee had decided in October 2009 to discontinue the present Cairngorms Explorer costing around £35,000 per year but to replace it with bus and cycling information in a leaflet or as part of another publication such as Parki or What's On. So the Cairngorms Explorer would continue but in a different and less expensive format. It was also noted that the Internet was the best way to obtain timetables which were liable to change at short notice. Finally, progress was noted on the electric vehicles project funded by the EU, CNPA, Community Energy Scotland, Hitrans, and the Climate Challenge Fund. Various other work was in hand to trial and encourage the use of electric and alternative powered vehicles. Further such work remained an alternative deployment for the sources of funding from the Heather Hopper.
13. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) The Heather Hopper was a very difficult decision. It was a popular public service linking the east and west sides of the Park. However, the costs per traveller made it economically non viable and poor use of public funding. Regrettably it was therefore time to look at how to redeploy that funding and the question was therefore what to do in terms of a replacement. There was merit in having a fund for school/groups field trips as proposed in the paper; there was a similar fund in Aberdeenshire Council already. It was also noted that this did not really represent a replacement for the Heather Hopper given that one would essentially be replacing a service for older age groups with something for the younger groups.
 - b) There was some discussion about whether the Heather Hopper had received a real trial. The suggestion had been made that the low numbers using the Heather Hopper were in part due to the poor connections made between this and other services. It was acknowledged there had been some operational problems; unfortunately getting timetables to dovetail was often very difficult in rural areas with a small number of services. The unwillingness of the operators to respond to concerns expressed earlier in the year with the timetabling were regrettable. However, it was clear that in its present form the service was not viable. Given that was the case, it was important to look for a replacement that kept communities linked. There was much concern about the integrity of the

Park and treating the Park as a whole; it was therefore important to keep the Park as one, rather than divided.

- c) There was some discussion about the fact that the Heather Hopper had previously received £35,000 from the CNPA and £35,000 from the two councils. Because of the operation of council budgets, in seeking to redeploy the Heather Hopper funds it was important to find a project which still remained within a transport budget. The proposed school field trip fund would come from an education budget. The field trip proposal should therefore be seen as a different issue and a different budget, and the discussion needed to focus on how to make use of funding within the transport budget. One suggestion was therefore to reallocate the funding to further work on electric vehicles.
- d) There was still the possibility that Stagecoach would keep related links, for example the link over the Cairnwell to Perth but this was a matter for Stagecoach.
- e) SNH had invested funding into a community transport fund in the Grampian area and it might therefore be worth pursuing this further with SNH and look for synergies between this and what the CNPA were proposing.
- f) It was noted that there were a number of policy issues all conflated in the discussion on the Heather Hopper: low carbon/social inclusion/transportation. It was suggested that further clarity was needed on what the CNPA was trying to do with this project and had the analysis to back up decisions (eg on carbon costs).
- g) The suggestion was made that while young people were certainly important, solutions should be looking at a mix of generations.
- h) It was important to look at existing community based initiatives and see if they provided a basis for developing a new replacement for the Heather Hopper.
- i) Local authorities and SNH had previously worked on packages for funding school trips to NNRs (National Nature Reserves) and this too might be worth pursuing.
- j) Further work on funding transport for field trips merited further investigation and could be broadened out to cover social inclusion and the health agenda. It would be important to think carefully about what benefits the project was aiming to produce, and therefore the groups that were to be targeted.
- k) The CNPA had always aimed to be innovative and it was important to try things but equally be prepared to call a halt when projects did not work and to learn from this. The Heather Hopper trial raised the interesting question whether it had been meeting a genuine need or whether it was a good idea that simply created an aspiration.
- l) There were other useful additions to the public transport system and it might be worth looking at other linkages for example on the Speyside Railway to the centre of Grantown-on-Spey, and the Linn of Dee to Braemar.
- m) The notion of creating a new culture of modern hitch hiking was put forward – this may have a place in scattered rural areas even if not in urban areas.

14. Summing up the Convener turned to Paragraph 9 of the paper and noted that for a range of reasons already considered the funding for the Heather Hopper should be discontinued. However, it was hoped that the funding from the three partners could be redeployed to an alternative project. It was also confirmed that the Cairngorms Explorer be published in a smaller format without timetables, as previously agreed by the Finance Committee. The decision on the possibility of a schools field trip fund, and further work on ultra low carbon projects involving electric vehicles, was less clear. The

proposed schools field trip fund certainly appeared to be worthy of further work; however there was also potential to look at community based travel schemes, of which some examples were already in existence. The suggestion was made by the Convener that a small short-term member working group met to identify further options to try and direct this work to identify the synergies with council funding. It would also be important to look into retaining an east west link.

15. The Board agreed the recommendations of the paper as follows:

- a) **Noted the actions to date, research and the transport review;**
- b) **Agreed the level of intervention in transport by the CNPA as follows:**
 - i. **That funding to the Heather Hopper was discontinued;**
 - ii. **The Cairngorms Explorer be published in the smaller format without timetables;**
 - iii. **Further work was done to look into the possibility of a schools field trip fund;**
 - iv. **Further work be done to look at the possibility of redeploying transport funding from the Heather Hopper to a community based transport project.**

16. Actions.

- a) **Convener to lead a small short-term member working group to help officers identify further options for redeploying transport budget from the Heather Hopper to other transport projects.**

Point of Entry Marker Project, Phase 3 (Paper 3)

17. Pete Crane introduced the paper which updated the Board on work undertaken to complete the Point of Entry Marker Project which will mark the proposed new boundary of the Cairngorms National Park. Approval was sought in principle to proceed with this final phase of the project, which had been delayed to await the confirmation of the extension of the southern boundary of the National Park to include parts of Perth and Kinross down to Blair Atholl.

18. Pete Crane reminded the Board that when the Point of Entry Marker Project had started nearly six years ago the Board had been aware of the importance of creating a good first impression for visitors. Interestingly, the interim results from the current visitor survey showed that a high proportion of people thought that an important reason for coming to the area was the existence of the National Park. 10% had found out they were in a National Park because of the signage. These findings were encouraging endorsement of the early decision to go ahead with the Point of Entry Marker Project. A complete report on earlier phases of this project had been presented to the Board previously. The remaining phase concerned the entry point markers now required for the extended boundary. There was now a disappointing lack of partners support. The criteria for European funding had changed, the Enterprise Companies had changed their criteria and various other partners simply no longer had the funding. Discussions were taking place with Perth and Kinross Council, but any amount forthcoming was unlikely to be large. The paper sought the support from the Board in principle for taking forward the phase 3 of this project. A further report would go to the Finance Committee to get agreement on the detail once the final funding package had been put together.

19. In discussion the following points were made;

- a) The point was made that the current position arose as a result of decisions made by the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament and it would not be inappropriate therefore to seek additional funding from these sources. It was agreed that this was a matter to be taken up in the usual discussion with Scottish Government Sponsor Division on the CNPA's annual grant and aid, and the point would be made that the Park Authority was expected to cover a large area with no increase, and possibly even a decrease in resources in the current financial climate.
- b) There was unanimous support by the Board for the Option 1 shown in table 1 which would result in the large marker being installed on the A9 in year one of the project, with the installation of the smaller markers on more minor roads being phased over two or more years.

20. The Board agreed the recommendations of the paper as follows:

- a) Noted the work undertaken to date on Phase 3 of the project;**
- b) Approved in principle the final phase of the project and that this should comprise the installation of the A9 marker in year one of the project with installation of other markers phased over two or more years. Approval of the detailed costs was delegated to the Finance Committee.**

Landscape Framework Update (Paper 4)

21. Frances Thin introduced the paper which provided an update on the Landscape Framework and proposed a project brief for taking this forward. The intention of the work was to use a systematic review of landscape character and wild land to create a robust and transparent basis for making decisions on a range of issues such as planning applications, land management, grants, funding for projects etc. The Landscape Framework would be an important tool in identifying the "special qualities" that had been referred to in the Local Plan and the National Park Plan. Member's attention was drawn in particular to paragraph 7 which explained how the Framework would be used in a practical example.

22. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) The paper was welcomed as a potentially good tool. However, the importance of using plain English was stressed.
- b) This was a complex issue but it was important to have a very clear explanation of why this was relevant and what the Framework was trying to do. Paragraph 17 was a good example of how to illustrate and explain what the Framework was all about. The point was made that people tended to relate to a National Park in terms of landscape and so it was important to establish just what it was that people valued about this.
- c) Pictures were often the best way of explaining this type of subject and had huge appeal to the public. A highly relevant community in this respect were the visitors.
- d) The Framework would sit alongside the Local Plan, under the National Park Plan and alongside other Frameworks (such as the Forest and Woodland Framework). These various Frameworks picked up various elements of the National Park Plan and it was important that they all supported each other and

there were no inconsistencies. Consultation on the Landscape Framework would be incorporated into the processes for consultation on the National Park Plan and the Local Plan – there would be no duplication.

- e) Paragraph 17 was a good illustration of how such a Landscape Framework could be used to correct imbalances that arose from policies applied at a very broad level.
- f) Creating the Framework provided a good opportunity to tell people about the National Park. It was therefore important to keep the document simple and easy to understand.
- g) The presentation with maps and diagrams was very helpful. Encapsulating this in the form of a DVD might be a good mechanism for presenting the Framework in an easy to understand form.
- h) The Framework provided a useful tool for looking at what the effects might be of changes to policy. The Framework did not make the decision on its own – it was merely a tool. It would be important to update the underpinning information on a regular basis.

23. The Board approved the recommendations of the paper as follows:

- a) **Noted the update on the project;**
- b) **Endorsed and approved the project brief;**
- c) **Endorsed the formation of the Board steering group comprising Sue Walker, Duncan Bryden, Eleanor Mackintosh, and Lucy Grant.**

The following papers were presented for information, with no discussion:

Review of the National Park Plan (Paper 5)

National Park Plan Four Monthly Progress Report 4 (Paper 6)

Corporate Plan Monitoring (Paper 7)

AOCB

- 24. Peter Argyle explained there had been a number of changes in the activities being undertaken by various DMOs in respect of the Cairngorms Business Partnership since the Board discussed this in September and agreed funding. He felt there were some issues which needed to be looked at and asked for a paper to be brought to the March Board meeting to pick up some of these issues and also consider strategic direction. It was noted that the Finance Committee were in any event considering an update from the Cairngorms Business Partnership in February as agreed by the Board. It was also agreed there would be a report back to the Board in March following this.
- 25. Murray Ferguson gave the Board an update on the Core Paths Plan. The Board had approved this in January 2008 and it was then submitted to the Scottish Government. A one day hearing had been held as part of the public local inquiry. The Minister had very recently written to the CNPA giving her approval to the Core Path Plan. This was good news and reflected well on the good levels of participation by communities in the consultations which had preceded the formation of the Plan. Of the 255 individual paths in the Plan, the Minister had decided on one needing to be removed with all others being included, along with the River Spey. This would give 580 miles of paths covered by the Plan. It was noted that objectors remained and indeed people could still object to the Plan.

26. There had been a certain amount of press coverage about two paths around Balmoral. The Board had originally decided against including these two paths because of advice received about security. One objection had been received about the exclusion of these paths and following this the Reporter had agreed that the paths should be included unless there were overriding security issues. The Minister had clearly taken advice on the security issue and had concluded, in agreement with the Board's original decision, that the paths should be excluded. The Board would need to formally adopt the Plan at its March Board meeting, and work could now start on implementation to improve the path network over the coming months and years.
27. The roundup of activity by Members was as follows:
- a) David Green had attended the launch of Cairngorms in the Curriculum in Blair Atholl by the Minister Roseanna Cunningham.
 - b) David Green had been invited to speak at the Perth and Kinross Agricultural Forum on the benefits of being in a National Park.
 - c) It was noted that there would be a round of new appointments to the Board to take effect from the 1st October. The Convener had agreed with the Scottish Government to run a number of open events to encourage members of the public to apply for Board membership. There would be one event in Blair Atholl, one on the East side of the Park and one on the West side.
 - d) Eric Baird had attended an Inclusive Cairngorms meeting. He noted the important advice and support that this group gave to the work of the CNPA.
 - e) Mary McCafferty had attended a Carrbridge event on woodcarving; this was a good example of what a small community can do. She had represented the CNPA at the Grantown Tri Tri; she had also attended the Rural Gathering in Perth which had included a wide range of speakers on rural development and LEADER projects.
 - f) Anne MacLean had attended the Highland Council Ward Forum in December.
 - g) Alastair MacLennan reported on the Farmers Forum which took place in Tomintoul and had attracted sixty people. It was a good event and considered disease eradication.
 - h) Geva Blackett had attended a Lantra event in Edinburgh which had made useful links with the Land Based Business Training Project.
 - i) Sue Walker had attended an OCPAS (Office of the Commission of Public Appointments Scotland) which considered general issues surrounding public board membership. She noted that a DVD had been prepared on board membership and featured two former members of the CNPA.

Date of Next Meeting

28. Friday 19th March at Glenlivet.