
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held in the Albert Hall, Ballater on Friday 9 June 2017 at 10.45am

PRESENT

Peter Argyle (Convener)
Rebecca Badger
Angela Douglas
Dave Fallows
Jeanette Gaul
Kate Howie
Janet Hunter
Gregor Hutcheon

Bill Lobban
Eleanor Mackintosh
Willie McKenna
Fiona Murdoch
Gordon Riddler
Gregor Rimell
Judith Webb
Brian Wood (Deputy Convener)

In Attendance:

Grant Moir, Chief Executive,
David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services,
Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning & Rural Development,
Hamish Trench, Director of Conservation & Visitor Experience,
Alix Harkness, Clerk to the Board

Apologies: Geva Blackett Paul Easto
 John Latham

Welcome and Introduction

1. Peter Argyle, the Convener, welcomed everyone to the meeting in Ballater.
2. The Convener said that interesting discussions with Roger Clegg, Association of Cairngorms Communities, Karen Derrick, Voluntary Action Badenoch & Strathspey, David Roger, Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action and Michael Coletta, Ballater Business Association focussing on community-led development had taken place the previous evening.

3. Apologies were received from the above Members.

Minutes of Last Meeting held on 7 April, 2017 – for approval

4. The draft Minutes of the last meeting held on 7 April 2017 were agreed with no amendments.

Matters Arising

5. The Convener provided an update on the Action points from the minutes of the meeting on 7 April 2017:
 - Action Points A1 to A11 at Para 11 – Closed – All action points associated with the NPPP were taken forward and were part of the NPPP approved by Scottish Ministers on 1st June 2017.

Declarations of Interest

7. Bill Lobban declared an interest in:
 - Item No. 8 Paper 3 - Direct interest – Is the Highland Council Champion for Mountain Hare

CEO Report (Paper 1)

8. Grant Moir Chief Executive introduced Paper 1 which highlights the main strategic work streams that are being directed by Management Team. Grant explained that these are areas where significant staff resources are being directed to deliver National Park Partnership Plan priorities. He highlighted the following areas:
 - a) The Civtech Challenge has gone through the first stage of companies to take to interview. Information can be found on the Civtech wiki page.
 - b) Volunteering – the launch will be on the 17th & 18th June. Board members wishing to attend should let Hamish know.
 - c) Next Board Visit will take place on 23rd June in Blair Atholl with a session on thinking about the new Local Development Plan Main Issues Report (LDP MIR) in the morning followed by a visit to the Mountain and the People project in the afternoon.
 - d) Europarc verifiers visited last week and the informal feedback received was that they were very impressed with all of the work going on to ensure that the National Park was an accredited sustainable tourism destination. Formal feedback is expected later in the summer.

- e) LEADER funding to develop the Cairngorms Nature Big Weekend had been successful.
 - f) There will be another Wee Walks week in September with more details to follow.
 - g) Office extension – the lease had been signed today and the date for entering the new extension would be July 2018.
 - h) Staff will be volunteering at the Royal Highland Show.
 - i) A PhD student from the University of the Highlands & Islands (UHI) would be studying the A9's impacts on the National Park and this would be starting in the Autumn.
9. In discussion the Board made the following observations and comments:
- a) What was the reason behind the Deeside way extension taking longer than expected? Hamish Trench confirmed that it was as a result of the combination of the capacity of the Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland (OATS) and the ongoing discussions with the land owners.
 - b) Gordon Riddler reported that he had attended the Aberdeenshire Tourism Conference and that Trip Advisor had performed an analysis of Aberdeenshire and that Ballater had been ranked second place for tourism. He also advised of work ongoing to look at tourism planning around cruise ship docking in Aberdeen.
 - c) How were priority sites for peatland restoration chosen? Grant advised that Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) have £8million nationally and that it was the role of the Cairngorms Peatland Restoration Officer to bid into the funding. Hamish added that SNH assess each site put forward in a bid and decided whether or not they are viable.
 - d) How much does the Civtech work costs and how was it being funded? Grant confirmed that the Authority and SNH were paying 50/50 split and that the total cost would depend on how many companies were being taken to the next stage. He gave an approximate figure of £15,000 for the CNPA.
 - e) What other planning applications were currently being prepared for Committee? Murray Ferguson confirmed the following applications were being prepared: residential units in Aviemore, visitor facilities at Balival near Kingussie, Braemar Games Heritage Centre, the Speyside and Deeside Way and Stage 3 of the A9 dualling project. He added that he would circulate a list to the Board.
 - f) A Board Member advised that the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) with Edinburgh University were currently looking at the impact of reindeer and their locations and undergoing DNA analysis of which plants they are eating.
10. The Convener highlighted that the Cairngorms Business Partnership Conference would be taking place on 28th June 2017 in Glen Tanar and that the Snow Roads

project would be the main focus of the event. He asked that Board Members wishing to attend to let the Clerk to the Board know so that the arrangements could be made.

11. The Board noted the Paper.

12. Actions:

- i. Board Members wishing to attend the Volunteering public meetings on 17th/ 18th June are to inform Hamish Trench.**
- ii. Murray Ferguson to circulate to the Board a list of current planning applications being worked up for Planning Committee.**
- iii. Board Members wishing to attend the CBP Conference on 28th June 2017 in Glen Tanar to let the Clerk to Board know so that places can be booked.**

**Strategic Risk Management & Monitoring Corporate Performance
(Paper 2)**

- 13. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services introduced Paper 2 which presents an update on the Authority's performance over the 2016/17 financial and operational year, the second year of the current Corporate Plan.**
- 14. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:**
 - a) A query was raised about the review of the Regeneration Project at Tomintoul & Glenlivet that was mentioned in the paper? In discussion it was clarified that the main issue at stake was the potential future support for the Tomintoul and Glenlivet Development Trust and the relationship to the Landscape Partnership Project. Any future decisions would be brought back to the Board or its Finance and Delivery Committee as appropriate.**
 - b) Were the Authority concerned about the staff turnover being 10% and would this impact on delivery? David advised that the staff turnover indicator continues to be flagged as amber and that the Management Team make the appropriate arrangements to ensure that the work on delivery of corporate priorities continues as unaffected as possible as a consequence of the turnover. He added that it was good for organisations to have some staff turnover as it enabled fresh 'eyes' and ideas, while recognising that ongoing levels of turnover certainly posed a delivery risk that Management Team needed to be aware of. He**

concluded that exit interviews are always carried out and the feedback from these is that staff were leaving as a result of pursuing further career opportunities.

- c) Was the Authority confident and comfortable with continuing to support the governance of Cairngorms Community Broadband? David advised that Community Broadband Scotland continues to work with them and that the support provided to them by the Authority is important. However the viability of the project has numerous timing constraints associated with procurement, and as a consequence of Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) funding bid and temporary LEADER funding both being potentially impacted by Brexit.
- d) Had the cause for the breakdowns of the people counters on key paths been identified? Hamish confirmed that the issues were understood and staff were trying to improve on these.
- e) What did the Regional Marketing Strategy for the Cairngorms National Park mean for monitoring and delivery? Murray confirmed that they had had a recent meeting with VisitScotland staff and the CBP; the strategy ensured that the work was effectively planned and delivered.
- f) Concern raised that 21.51% of Members of Scottish Parliament (MSPs) had reported a neutral view on the CNP and whether there was a need to change that view. Grant advised that he was happy with the results and that of the 129 MSPs it was important to continue to focus on the NP's regional list and constituency MSPs.
- g) Could Risks named A6 and R2 be removed from the Risk Register? Grant advised that this would be reviewed by the Audit & Risk Committee. David confirmed that risk A6 was intended to be removed depending on the results of the next Staff Survey scheduled for the Autumn 2017.
- h) With reference to Annex I and the ecological status of the water bodies in 2013, was that correct? Suggestion made to direct staff to the correct person in SEPA who can provide that information.

15. **The Board reviewed the update on Corporate Performance and Strategic Risk as set out in the paper.**

16. **Actions: None.**

17. Bill Lobban left the room.

Mountain Hares (Paper 3)

18. Grant Moir introduced Paper 3 which sets out the current position of the CNPA on hare culling and is an opportunity for the Board to discuss the position. He added that he would circulate a recent SNH report to the Board.
19. The Board considered the paper and made the following comments and observations:
 - a) One of the key issues was that there was a lack of data around hare numbers and that at present there is no agreed methodology for counting mountain hares. Hamish advised that the ongoing work by James Hutton Institute would provide a methodology for counting and that the CNPA would work with Estates to implement this.
 - b) Suggestion made to have a Board Training session on mountain hare ecology to provide Members with more knowledge.
 - c) The need to understand why the mountain hare population fluctuates as it does. Grant advised that an SNH report on mountain hares would be published soon and as soon as it was available it would be circulated.
 - d) Potential for the CNPA to look at some further research around hare populations etc. Grant advised that at present there was no further research being planned by the CNPA.
 - e) Concern raised around sport shooting associated with mountain hare populations.
 - f) Suggestion made to gather information from different estates as to how they take forward mountain hare culls.
20. **The Board discussed the Authority's current position on mountain hare management and culling.**
21. **Actions:**
 - i. **Grant to circulate to the Board SNH's report on Satellite Tagging.**
 - ii. **Grant to circulate SNH's further report when published during the Summer of 2017.**
22. Bill Lobban returned to the meeting.

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23. Grant advised that Peter had written to the Convenor of HIE to arrange a meeting to discuss Cairngorm Mountain.

24. It was likely that the An Camas Mor application would go to the August Planning Committee meeting.
25. Grant confirmed that SNH's new Chairman was Mike Cantlay who had previously been the Chair of Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority and VisitScotland.
26. The Convener reported that Lee Haxton, Community Support Manager, had left the organisation and wanted to thank him for all his work with communities in the National Park. He also congratulated Hamish Trench on his recent appointment to CEO of the Scottish Land Commission.
27. The Convener advised that this was the last Board meeting for four members: Fiona Murdoch, Kate Howie, Jeanette Gaul and Gregor Rimell. He recognised their positive contributions on the Board and thanked them. He presented each of them with a print of the Cairngorms.
28. The Convener reminded the Board that there would be a Board visit and discussion with the East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership.

Date of Next Meeting

29. Next formal Board meeting to be held on 29 September 2017 (subsequently changed to 6 October 2017) The Community Hall, Boat of Garten.
30. The meeting concluded at 12.06.