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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at The Lonach Hall, Donside on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2006 at 1.30pm

### PRESENT

|                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Eric Baird         | Alastair MacLennan |
| Duncan Bryden      | William McKenna    |
| Basil Dunlop       | Sandy Park         |
| Douglas Glass      | Sheena Slimon      |
| David Green        | Richard Stroud     |
| Marcus Humphrey    | Susan Walker       |
| Bruce Luffman      | Ross Watson        |
| Eleanor Mackintosh | Bob Wilson         |
| Anne MacLean       |                    |

### In Attendance:

|                 |                      |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| David Cameron   | Andrew Harper        |
| Pete Crane      | Jane Hope            |
| Murray Ferguson | Hamish Trench        |
| Bob Grant       | Francoise van Buuren |

### Apologies:

|                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Stuart Black    | Andrew Rafferty |
| Nonie Coulthard | Gregor Rimell   |
| Angus Gordon    | David Selfridge |
| Lucy Grant      |                 |

### Minutes of Last Meeting – approval

1. The minutes of the last meeting held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2006 were approved with three minor amendments:  
Paragraph 17: Reference should be to the Strathspey Railway  
Paragraph 15(c): Last sentence to make clear that the decision on the proposed environmental improvements should be deferred (not the CNPA's recommendation should be deferred);  
Paragraph 15(e): last sentence to make clear that "more widely" meant the proposal should be looked at from an interest as well as a geographical point of view.

## **Matters Arising**

2. None.

## **Declarations of Interest**

3. Basil Dunlop – is a member of the Speyside Way Management Group – the point was noted as a non-material interest in relation to Paper 3.  
Bob Wilson – is a member of the Speyside Way Management Group – the point was noted as a non-material interest in relation to Paper 3.  
Ross Watson – noted his father farmed land which would be potentially crossed by the extension of the Speyside Way.  
Willie McKenna – declared his decision to withdraw from the discussion on Paper 3 as an employee of Rothiemurchus Estate which was likely to be the subject of discussion, this was a possible conflict of interest.

## **National Park Plan (Paper 1)**

4. Hamish Trench introduced the paper which sought the Board's approval of the National Park Plan and Consultation Report for submission to Ministers. The plan was the result of over two years of engagement with a wide range of organisations, communities and interests about the future of the National Park. It set out a shared vision for the future of the Park, a framework for its long-term management and a series of priorities for action in the short-term. The support of partners - particularly the other public bodies that have a particular role in delivering the plan – was vital to its success. As a consequence the Advisory Panel on Joined-up Government would be invited to confirm their support for the plan so that it could be submitted to Ministers as a collective approach among the public bodies. It was noted that provided the Plan had the support of the Advisory Panel, it would be submitted to Ministers by mid December 2006.
5. In discussion the following points were made:
  - a) It was proposed that some minor amendments be made to the Plan before the final version was submitted to Ministers.
  - b) Officials were commended on an excellent piece of work, and partners thanked for their constructive involvement.
6. **The Board agreed the recommendation of the paper as follows:**
  - a) **Approved the National Park Plan and Consultation Report subject to final minor amendments.**
  - b) **Agreed to the submission of the Plan and Consultation Report to Ministers subject to support from the Advisory Panel on Joined Up Government.**

## **Action**

7. **Hamish Trench to submit National Park Plan and Consultation Report to Scottish Executive, indicating level of support (as appropriate) from partners on the Advisory Panel.**

## Point of Entry Marker project (Paper 2)

8. Pete Crane introduced the paper which asked the Board to note progress on Phase 1 of the project and sought the Boards approval of expenditure of £289,000 for works to be carried out on Phase 2 of the project covering four trunk road sites. On Phase 1, nineteen of the twenty one permanent markers had been installed and the contract was nearing completion. Whilst installation work had gone smoothly and met the aims of the project, some minor additional works were required to be carried out to meet visibility and landscaping requirements. It was noted that due to changes in the grant income there is an estimated shortfall of £12,000 and a paper would be submitted to the Finance Committee for approval of the additional costs needed to complete Phase 1 of the project.
9. Phase 2 of the project covered work on four main trunk road sites at A9 (at Drumochter and the Slochd), A86 (at Kinloch Laggan) and A95 (at Mains of Dalvey). The costs remained as previously estimated and the CNPA contribution was within the range proposed in September 2005. Drumochter was both the highest profile entrance and the site that provided the greatest challenges and opportunities. The site had not been surveyed in detail and no detailed design options or costs were available. Work on the three other sites could take place independently of any works at the Drumochter lay-by, and the proposed costs cover these sites and the installation of the marker alone at Drumochter. It was noted that a further paper on the detailed options appraisals for the Drumochter lay-by would be submitted to the Board in Spring of 2007.
10. In discussion the following points were made:
  - a) It was pointed out that in Table 1 the second "Total Income" should read "Total Expenditure".
  - b) There was recognition of a multiplicity of signs at Drumochter and it was confirmed that the proposals for the lay-by included a reduction in these. The installation of the marker alone would not prevent work being carried out at a later date on the lay-by. Erection of the marker and lay-by works would be subject to separate contracts.
  - c) The issue of visibility of markers was raised. It was acknowledged that the gloss finish may reflect the light making it difficult to see the marker clearly. The designers were confident that removing the gloss finish will resolve this issue, and work was in hand.
  - d) It was suggested that the marker on the A93 should more accurately be referred to as being at The Cairnwell. Concerns were also expressed about potential snow damage. The location of the marker had been chosen to minimise the impact of damage caused by snow ploughs. The situation would be monitored.
  - e) Reports indicated an increasingly positive response to the erection of markers and the associated environmental works were an important integral part of the project.
  - f) The current debate about boundary changes to the Park could have implications for some of the markers. Any changes to the boundary would only affect the markers at Drumochter and Glenshee. However, the current project was proceeding on the basis of the 2003 Parliamentary approved boundary.

- g) With markers now being installed there was an opportunity to evaluate the visitor recognition of the Park Brand. Such a study could either form part of a student project or be incorporated into the 2007/08 visitor survey.
- h) On a point of clarification about delegated responsibility, it was confirmed that the Finance Committee had authority to authorise additional expenditure (over and above what the Board approved in relation to this paper) within the usual delegated limits, up to £50k.

**11. The Board agreed the recommendations in the paper as follows:**

- a) **Noted the work undertaken to date on Phase 1 of the project.**
- b) **Noted that an estimated £12,000 was required to complete Phase 1, and delegated authority to the Finance Committee.**
- c) **Approved the expenditure of £289,000 for the installation works of four permanent granite markers on trunk road sites.**
- d) **Noted that a paper is to be submitted in Spring of 2007 on options for the upgrade of the Drumochter lay-by.**
- e) **Agreed that decisions on changes in expenditure and financial details for Phase 2 be delegated to the Finance Committee (within usual approved limits on delegation).**

**Proposed Extension to the Speyside Way (Paper 3)**

12. Bob Grant introduced the paper which sought the Board's agreement to the advice to be given to SNH on the proposed extension from Aviemore to Newtonmore and to note the feedback from the recent public consultation on the Aviemore to Dalraddy section. The route had been approved in principle in September 2005 but more detailed work had been required and it had proved difficult to find a solution that satisfied everyone. The recent consultation exercise demonstrated considerable support from a wide range of parties to the Wade Road option. On the basis of analysis the proposed extended Long Distance Route on this line would provide all of the benefits identified by consultees. In addition, the Route would provide an attractive low ground, off-road link between communities and prominent centres of holiday accommodation in an area that currently lacks any form of managed provision for outdoor access. A number of interested parties also expressed a desire for the route to be on the other side of the river and SNH's views were sought on the natural heritage impact. Advice received was that a route in this area would pass through several designated sites and, on two out of the three land management units, the route would pass through woods with both lekking and breeding Capercaillie. In view of the environmental sensitivity of the area it had been decided not to consult further on a route option to the east of the Spey.

13. A number of points were clarified prior to the Board discussions and these were:
- a) Paragraph 44 implies that CNPA will be responsible for all maintenance costs. This is not quite accurate as CNPA responsibility extended to the overall management of the route but did still allow CNPA to pursue a range of funding sources for the maintenance;
  - b) One consultee had contacted Park Authority staff since the paper was written and asked that a number of matters be clarified:

- i) Paragraph 15: The reference to the “preferred route” was to the route favoured in the previous consultation (Dec. 04 to Mar. 05) not to the Wade Road option;
- ii) Paragraph 21: Fields were let for grazing all year round; and
- iii) Paragraph 23: Views expressed that shooting activity on the estate over which the Wade Road passed was at least as intensive as on the Loch Alvie option.

14. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) A degree of public support for the Rothiemurchus/Inshriach route was highlighted although it was acknowledged that this had not been measured. Whilst it was confirmed that the process of engagement with key stakeholders had been robust, further consideration of this option should be included in CNPA’s advice to SNH.
- b) Whilst the Rothiemurchus/Inshriach route was already promoted for recreational use, the potential impact of a Long Distance Route through Rothiemurchus/Inshriach, with the consequential increase in recreational use, would have been a factor that SNH took cognisance of in their response.
- c) The 2 consultations and the conclusions reached in the paper reflected a robust and inclusive process.
- d) Safety issues over the bridge at Kincaig would point to neither of the options being the best solution for the extended route.
- e) It was important that land management interests were considered in developing advice for SNH.
- f) Consideration should be given to finding innovative solutions to funding both the capital and maintenance costs of the route and SNH should be asked to explore such solutions when developing their advice for Ministers.

15. **The Board agreed the recommendations in the paper as follows:**

- a) **The feedback received on the recent public consultation was noted;**
- b) **The advice to be given to SNH at paragraph 39 was agreed, subject to this being supplemented in 3 respects:**
  - i) **Noting that the existing recreational access at Rothiemurchus was already promoted;**
  - ii) **Drawing to SNH’s attention that there was public support for an alternative route through Rothiemurchus, but that it was difficult to quantify; and**
  - iii) **Urging SNH to give further consideration to possible funding amounts and mechanisms.**

## **Action**

16. **Bob Grant to submit advice to SNH.**

## **Committee Membership and Financial Delegation (Paper 4)**

17. David Cameron introduced the paper which sought the Board's approval to the Committee membership structure and the scheme of financial delegations. A review of Committee membership was carried out following the departure of the previous Convener and appointments of new members. Those nominated had confirmed their willingness to serve on committees. Changes in financial delegation were proposed to allow greater flexibility at operational level and provide more meaningful limits for submission to Finance Committee and the Board.

**18. The Board agreed the recommendations in the paper as follows:**

- a) **Approved the Committee memberships set in Annex 1 of the paper.**
- b) **Approved the scheme of financial delegation.**

## **AOCB**

19. None.

## **Date of Next Meeting**

20. Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> February at the Cairngorm Hotel, Aviemore.