
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at the YMCA, Grantown-on-Spey on 2nd July 2004 at 1.30pm

PRESENT

Peter Argyle
Eric Baird
Stuart Black
Duncan Bryden
Sally Dowden
Basil Dunlop
Douglas Glass
Angus Gordon
Mrs Lucy Grant
Eleanor Mackintosh
Bob Severn

Alastair MacLennan
William McKenna
Gregor Rimell
David Selfridge
Joyce Simpson
Sheena Slimon
Richard Stroud
Andrew Thin
Susan Walker
Andrew Rafferty

In Attendance:

Danny Alexander
Murray Ferguson
Jane Hope
Andrew Harper
Nick Halfhide
Debbie Strang

Apologies:

Bob Wilson
David Green
Bruce Luffman
Anne MacLean

Minutes of Last Meeting – Approval

1. The minutes of the previous meeting (4 June) were approved with no changes.

Matters Arising

2. All action points from the previous minutes were in hand, on the agenda, or had been dealt with. Two additional points were made:

- a) Item 23: Nick Halfhide would be responsible for ensuring integration of the Community Development Strategy with the Park Plan.
- b) Murray Ferguson reported that Scotland's National Parks would be represented on the National Access Forum by Kristin Scott, CNPA Senior Access Officer. Her counterpart at Loch Lomond NPA, Bridget Jones, would be the substitute member.

Entry Point Signage for the Cairngorms National Park (paper 1)

3. Murray Ferguson and Debbie Strang introduced the paper.
4. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) In the design phase, consideration should be given to variety of colours and types of granite that exist in the Cairngorms.
 - b) The size of signs would vary according to the location.
 - c) This project was not considering signs directing people to the Park from outside it; it is simply about signs to mark entry to the Park.
 - d) The principle of establishing a maintenance and management regime for the signs should be included. This should also include adequate litter collection.
 - e) Signs should also be developed for railway stations, but these would be of a different scale and nature in keeping with their location.
 - f) It is of paramount importance that we can be sure that this project represents value for money. This project represents a long-term investment in the visitor management infrastructure of the area, which can help raise standards in the area overall. Even a very small increase in GDP of the Park as a consequence of increased visitor awareness would repay this project in a matter of months.
 - g) Given the scale of the project, the risks inherent in it need to be carefully managed. Budgets need to be firm, not flexible, so that financial risks are as far as possible borne by the contractor and not the CNPA. This could include provisions as to the longevity of the signs.
 - h) These signs will create the first impression of the Park for many visitors. If they are not of a high quality, an important opportunity will have been missed.
 - i) Many of the benefits of such signs will be significantly enhanced if they include visitor information. Unless orientation information is available at the sign places, much of the benefit of 'grabbing the attention' is lost.
 - j) The quality of the Park is what makes a successful visit of holiday, not just the signs. So high quality signs need to be reflected in a high quality visitor experience.
 - k) In the design phase, consideration should be given to the use of reflective materials or illumination.
5. **The paper's three recommendations were agreed as follows:**
 - a) **Members agreed to endorse the general principles which have been developed in Phase 1, as set out in the paper (paragraph 15), subject to including two additional principles:**
 - **The development on an effective maintenance regime is an integral part of the project; and**
 - **The choice of materials to be used and the financial management of the project should not expose the CNPA to a high level of risk;**

- b) Members agreed that the high quality signs described in Option 2 are the most desirable design option for entry point markers and that CNPA staff should now, as a matter of priority, investigate external funding opportunities with partners; and**
- c) Members agreed that opportunities for provision of visitor information as described in Option 3 should be investigated with potential funding partners.**

National Park Plan (paper 2)

6. Nick Halfhide introduced the paper.
7. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) It will be important to clarify the relationship between the Park Plan and the Community Planning process
 - b) It would be helpful to have a diagrammatic representation of the relationship of the National Park Plan to the other strategies and plans that have been, or are being, developed.
 - c) The Park Plan should also link in to work on Emergency Planning in the Park area.
 - d) The proposed structure of the Park Plan does not mean that the content of each section is cast in stone – it provides a framework for work in each area to go forward.
 - e) Regard for environmental impact will run through the Park Plan, rather than being restricted to one section.
 - f) There needs to be a close relationship between the Local Plan and Park Plan processes to ensure that the two plans fit together and are not out of line with each other.
 - g) Work on the Park Plan will involve learning from and taking account of contributions to previous consultations, including the outcome of Community Planning Seminars.
 - h) The National Park Plan will be a key focus for the work of the whole organisation.
 - i) Given the importance of the Park Plan to the organisation, it is appropriate that it is considered and discussed regularly by the Board rather than by a smaller Working Group.
 - j) It is important that we work with other agencies and partners to help them align their work with the 4 aims of the Park prior to the implementation of the Park Plan. It was noted that several partners were already developing their approach to suit the requirements of the National Park. This is being addressed through the Advisory Panel on Joined Up Government and through discussions at Officer level.
8. **The Board approved the timetable set out in the paper and noted progress to date.**
9. **The Board agreed proposed contents of the Park Plan and approved the overall approach that was proposed.**
10. **The Board agreed to discontinue the Park Plan Working Group, it having completed its work, and replace it with a broader forum involving a wide range of stakeholders.**

CNPA's STRATEGIC APPROACH TO TOURISM (paper 3)

11. Andrew Harper introduced the paper. He explained that the Sustainable Tourism Strategy would provide the overall framework for our work on tourism.
12. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) In seeking to raise standards, we should make sure that this does not result in a bland uniformity across the Park. Our aim should be to capitalise on the remarkable diversity of experiences that are to be found within the Park. There needs to be a clear distinction between 'cohesion' and 'conformity'.
 - b) The reform of the tourism structure is a major opportunity for the Park Authority, working in collaboration with colleagues in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs to influence future arrangements.
 - c) The word 'spectacular' in the vision section of the Tourism Marketing Strategy may not be the best adjective to describe the unique and special attractions of the Park.
 - d) The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism spells out very clearly the link between 'sustainability' and 'tourism.'
 - e) One of the major weaknesses of the Park as a tourist destination is the wide variation in the quality of service. More work is needed to raise the overall level of visitor experience to the high standards demonstrated by many providers. In travelling around the Park for meetings, the Board has experienced very wide variations in the quality of service, food, and accommodation. The marketing strategy cannot succeed unless people who visit the Park receive a good service and have a good experience.
 - f) The friendliness of people within the Park is a significant strength.
 - g) Consideration needs to be given to helping visitors to identify providers that deliver a good experience – this will be part of the process of developing and rolling out the Park brand.
13. **The Board approved the CNPA's strategic approach to tourism as set out in the paper.**
14. **The Board noted the actions being taken to ensure that both of Scotland's National Parks benefit from the new national arrangements for tourism support.**
15. **The Board endorsed the revised Cairngorms Tourism Marketing Strategy.**

AOCB

Forthcoming conferences

16. Andrew Thin reported that the CNPA had been invited to attend the Europarc and Association of National Park Authorities conferences. While we can learn a lot from these events, there is a risk that participation in these events will be perceived by some as a "jolly".
17. **The Board agreed that delegations for these events should be restricted to one Board member and member of staff, as appropriate for each event and that strenuous**

efforts must be made by all involved get the most out of the experience and to feed back to others.

18. Action:

- a) Eric Baird and Nick Halfhide would attend the Europarc conference and Eric would report back to the Board.**

Land-Based Business Training Project

19. Andrew Thin reported that a leaflet had been circulated to the Board promoting the Land Based Businesses Training Project. Board members should encourage wide circulation of this information to encourage take up.

Out of hours services

20. Sheena Slimon raised proposals to alter the out of hours services provided by GPs in Badenoch and Strathspey had been published by NHS Highland. This would involve cover for Badenoch and Strathspey between the hours of midnight and 6am being provided by a GP in Inverness. This would not help promote either sustainable communities or sustainable tourism, two of the Park's priorities.
21. Andrew Thin reported that he had written to Gary Coutts, Chairman of NHS Highland, requesting details of the precise proposals and the consultation arrangements that have been put in place. We should be concerned about these proposals because the CNPA has a clear concern with sustainable social welfare, with the needs of visitors to the Park, and for the needs of an ageing population. In particular, there needs to be adequate, effective consultation with the communities affected.
22. Similar changes have been proposed by NHS Grampian and NHS Moray. In Grampian, the plans would see one GP on call for the area from Deeside to the south of Braemar.

23. Action:

- a) Andrew Thin to write in similar terms to all relevant Health Boards in the Park, including NHS Grampian and NHS Moray.**

Tribute to Chris

24. Bob Severn paid tribute to Chris Barley, who died last week. Mr Barley had been a leading light with the Cairngorms Mountain Rescue, involved in over 500 rescues, as well as a friend, neighbour, and dentist to many people in the area. He will be sorely missed.

Recycling

25. Willie McKenna requested that a system be established for the recycling of board papers.

26. Action:

- a) Jane Hope will look into this.**

Date of Next Meeting

27. 13 of August in Logie Coldstone.