
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at The Albert Hall, Ballater on Friday 2nd December 2005 at 1.30pm

PRESENT

Eric Baird
Stuart Black
Duncan Bryden
Sally Dowden
Basil Dunlop
Douglas Glass
Bruce Luffman
Eleanor Mackintosh
Anne MacLean
William McKenna

Sandy Park
Gregor Rimell
David Selfridge
Joyce Simpson
Sheena Slimon
Richard Stroud
Andrew Thin
Susan Walker
Bob Wilson

In Attendance

David Bale
David Cameron
Murray Ferguson
Nick Halfhide
Patricia Hamilton
Dicken Higgins

Jane Hope
Fiona Newcombe
Andy Rinning
Claire Ross
Hamish Trench
Francoise van Buuren

Apologies

Angus Gordon
Lucy Grant
David Green

Marcus Humphrey
Alastair MacLennan
Andrew Rafferty

Welcome and Apologies

1. The Convenor welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apologies as above.

Minutes of Last Meeting – approval

2. The minutes of the meeting of the 4th November 2005 were approved with no amendments.

Matters Arising

3. Matters arising were:
 - a) Paragraph 9: the CNPA's response on future ownership and management of the Cairngorms Estate had been forwarded to Bidwells.
 - b) Paragraph 18b: Andy Rinning was in the process of putting together a programme of "out and about visits" for the Board in 2006. However, it was noted that a recent visit which had been arranged to the Waste Recycling Plant at Grainish, Aviemore had been very poorly attended by Board Members despite eight expressions of interest. This was insulting to the owner who had gone to a lot of trouble to set up the visit. Further, it sent out completely the wrong message given that waste management was a subject of considerable interest to the CNPA Board. The general point was that before arranging visits in the future, the Board Secretariat needed to be very clear that members supported the visit and wanted it. On the specific visit to Grainish, this had yielded some very useful points which were now being discussed further at officer level with Highland Council. The possibility of a future visit to tie in with a Board meeting in the vicinity would be looked into.

National Park Plan: Draft for Consultation (paper 1)

4. Nick Halfhide and Hamish Trench introduced the paper which sought the Board's approval to the draft that would form the basis of the formal consultation in Spring 2006; and also sought approval to a consultation of 14 weeks. It was emphasised that approval was being sought for the consultation draft, not what the final Plan should look like.
5. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) The introduction should make the link with community planning quite explicit. The whole basis of the Park Plan was integration of objectives and a partnership approach to achieving this. While the community planning approach was a thread running throughout the plan, this needed to be made quite explicit.
 - b) The section dealing with the special qualities of the Cairngorms needed to include a paragraph on the freshwater environment.
 - c) In some sections, notably section 5.4.4 on deer management, phraseology about coordination and collaboration needed to recognise the need for inclusiveness and involvement of those people who had the relevant knowledge and were arguably closest to the issues.
 - d) A number of other detailed comments were made and recorded by Nick Halfhide for inclusion in the text which would be sent to the printer
6. The Convenor noted that he had been approached by many people who had been impressed by the way the CNPA had gone about putting together this first draft of the National Park Plan. He congratulated Nick Halfhide and his team on a good process and a good document, and looked forward to a good consultation in the spring.
7. **The Board agreed the recommendations of the paper as follows:**
 - a) **The draft was approved as the basis for the formal consultation next spring; and**
 - b) **The Board agreed that the formal consultation should last fourteen weeks.**

Integrated Grants Programme – First Update August to December 2005 (paper 2)

8. Dicken Higgins introduced the paper which reported on the progress made with the CNPA's Integrated Grants Programme from August to December 2005. Dicken noted that since writing the paper progress had continued, with over £137,000 now committed. He now estimated that at least 80% of the funds available should be committed by the end of the financial year. He noted that the scheme had not been launched until part way through the summer which accounted for the uptake to date being lower than originally hoped for. It had taken some time for applications to start coming in, but the increase in applications even in the last two weeks suggested that the scheme's momentum was now building up. The programme was more specific compared with the first year. Further the access stream of the grants programme tended to be quite slow in coming to fruition given that considerable time was often needed for discussions with land owners.

9. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) Eric Baird declared an interest given that the Glen Tanar Ranger Service had a grant application pending.
 - b) More applications were being received from the Badenoch and Strathspey part of the Park than from other areas.
 - c) Any enquiries, however casual, should be directed to Dicken Higgins. The CNPA's philosophy with this grants programme was to help people develop their proposals, rather than simply give a yes or a no to a worked up proposal.
 - d) A distinction needed to be drawn between the enquiries and actual proposals. Over 200 enquiries had been received to date via telephone and email; any contact for any reason was logged as an enquiry. Only 42 formal applications had been received; others were still under discussion. The CNPA team aimed to help applicants develop their proposals.
 - e) The scheme had been designed to be as flexible and as open as possible. All applications were looked at on a case by case basis, and the ability of the application to contribute to the aims of the Park.
 - f) The bringing together of streams of funding from different public sector organisations into the one scheme was to be applauded. However, care was needed to ensure that the net result was not a decrease in the level of funding because of the application of a de minimis rule.
 - g) There had not been much interest from schools in the grants programme and this might be an area worthy of further stimulation.

[Bruce Luffman left the meeting]

- h) The Integrated Grants Programme was a very good example of the public sector agencies joining up. It would be appropriate to write back to SNH and express the CNPA's appreciation.

10. The Board noted the recommendations of the paper as follows:

- a) The successful establishment and promotion of the grants programme;**
- b) The status of the programme and consequent expected delivery outputs by the end of the financial year; and**

c) Progress made in pooling funds to grant aid Park related activities.

Corporate Plan Report: Theme 2 (paper 3)

11. David Bale and Fiona Newcombe introduced the paper which updated the Board on delivery of the second strategic theme of the Corporate Plan “to promote sustainable resource, land and water management; and to protect and enhance our wildlife landscapes”. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) The LBAP project was only now starting to show its real potential of involving people in conservation directly. Projects were now beginning to come forward because there was a pot of funding available from the pooled contributions of the funding partners. This meant that projects could be taken forward without the need to tap into existing schemes such as ESA, RSA etc.
- b) The development of a biological records centre to cover the wider Cairngorms LBAP area was welcome. Making this a reality was still dependent on part funding, but the signs were encouraging at this stage.
- c) It was important to ensure the Highland locational premium be promoted to foresters to help deliver the Park’s aims.
- d) It was noted that the Brand Management Committee had recently agreed criteria for beef, lamb and vegetables produced within the Park. Criteria for food processors would be dealt with separately.
- e) The Agri-Waste Project referred to in paragraphs 11 and 12 appeared to be confined to farms, although originally there had been some possibility of widening the scheme out to other sectors. If there was an opportunity to widen out the scheme, this should not be missed. A note would be circulated to Members responding to this point.
- f) The CNPA had attended a recent Euro Montana Conference in Aviemore which focused on the production of public benefits by land managers. This was a useful opportunity to speak to and influence a wide range of policy makers from the UK and the rest of Europe. Feedback from the conference would be circulated to Members for information. The reference at paragraph 15 to communication and consultation grant schemes for land manager must be properly focused. It must be a genuine two way dialogue between land managers and the wider community and not just a process for publicising the activities of land managers. This point was noted and Fiona Newcombe confirmed that the scheme would be constructed accordingly. On the Agri Waste project it was noted that this was a one-off scheme and that the long-term issue was that waste management should be dealt with as an integral part of the running of every farm business, not as a special activity. Further, if the public funding was being used to pay for the collection of waste from just one sector, it needed to be quite clear why this was justifiable. The Land Management and ESD teams should work closely on this.

12. The Board noted the paper.

AOCB

Finance Committee

13. Eleanor Mackintosh reported, as Chair of the Finance Committee, that the Committee had expressed some concern over the reported cash flow shown in the recent report on Operational Plan expenditure. The reported difference between projected spend and actual spend compared with the budget was no worse than this time last year; at the end of last year final spend was within 3% of budget. Nevertheless, it was felt appropriate for the Finance Committee to keep in close touch with progress as the year end approached. The Committee Chair would have regular meetings with the Head of Corporate Services so that she could report back to the Committee on the progress. It was acknowledged that managing the expenditure reflected in over 100 different lines in the Operational Plan was a difficult task.

Local Plan/Housing

14. An article had appeared recently in the Sunday Times inaccurately reporting the CNPA's proposals to restrict home ownership within the National Park. To some extent inaccurate reporting was inevitable and very difficult to control. Nevertheless, given the importance of the Local Plan it was essential to get the communications right. The Head of Communications was currently working with the Planning Team to develop a communication plan. The coverage had been misleading but not particularly damaging, and if anything had at least raised everyone's awareness of the issues. The most important point was that local people got the right story.

Date of Next Meeting

15. Friday 13th January 2006, Cairngorm Hotel, Aviemore