
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at Dalwhinnie Village Hall on Friday 3rd December 2004 at 1.30pm

PRESENT

Eric Baird
Stuart Black
Duncan Bryden
Basil Dunlop
Douglas Glass
David Green
Marcus Humphrey
Bruce Luffman
Eleanor Mackintosh
Anne MacLean

Alastair MacLennan
William McKenna
Sandy Park
Gregor Rimell
David Selfridge
Joyce Simpson
Sheena Slimon
Richard Stroud
Andrew Thin
Bob Wilson

In Attendance

Murray Ferguson
Debbie Strang
Quentin McLaren
Fiona Newcombe
Denby Pettitt
Daniel Alexander
Andy Rinning
David Cameron

Apologies

Lucy Grant
Susan Walker
Andrew Rafferty
Sally Dowden
Angus Gordon

Welcome and Introduction

1. The Convener welcomed all present to the meeting and noted apologies received as set out above.

Minutes of Last Meeting – approval

2. Eric Baird commented that the minute at paragraph 11 suggested a more formal role of coordination than he had recalled from the meeting: the intent had been to liaise with ACC with regard to appropriate involvement by the Board at their meetings.
3. An amendment to paragraph 11 was agreed as follows: Eric Baird to liaise with ACC on appropriate attendance by CNPA Board Members at their meetings

Matters Arising

4. With regard to the action at paragraph 11, Eric Baird reported that he had met with the Convener of the ACC. Consequently, an invitation had been extended to the directly elected members of the Board to ACC meetings in order to open up a two-way channel of communication. Eleanor Mackintosh queried whether the invitation was to participate or only to listen; Alastair MacLennan requested an email setting out the timetable of meetings and David Green requested clarification of the terms of reference for the ACC. William McKenna noted that many of the meetings were held during the day and that work commitments would prevent his attending, although he would like to do so. Andrew Thin commented that it would be useful to point out that meetings would possibly be better attended if held outside of normal working hours.
5. **Action:**
 - a. **It was agreed that Eric Baird would continue to liaise on these matters on behalf of the Board.**

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

6. Murray Ferguson, Debbie Strang and Quentin McLaren introduced the paper which reported on progress made since the Board last considered the issue in July 2004. The paper also sought agreement on the next steps for further development of the project. Murray Ferguson highlighted the work which had been undertaken on the project since the Board set the guiding principles for its future development and indicated that project work was still in a developmental phase.
7. Debbie Strang emphasised the need in progressing the project to minimise the risk to the Authority and its partners. In this regard investigation had been undertaken on the potential granite and glass materials for the signs; revised cost estimates had been drawn up based on a further review of potential sites; and consideration had been given to the best form for future tender invitations. On the latter point, a number of companies had indicated that a single tender process covering design and installation would not be possible as a consequence of the funding uncertainties at this stage.

8. Debbie Strang referred the Board to the pertinent recommendations set out on the covering page of the report. Attention was drawn to the request to the Board that it authorise funding at this stage to commission landscape/design consultants to undertake essential development work, and to install six temporary metal signs at the principal entry points to the National Park.
9. Quentin McLaren outlined the status of negotiations on the funding package for the project. Project contributions had been sought from 2 local authorities, 3 local enterprise companies and European Union Objective 1 funding via 2 funding programmes. These applications were presently at various stages of decision and a positive outcome was sought by April 2005.
10. In response to a question from William McKenna on the reason for only 2 local authorities being included in the funding package, Quentin McLaren indicated that in initial discussions only 2 had been willing to consider a level of funding commensurate with the significance of the project.
11. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a. David Green indicated that signs in all areas of the National Park were much desired by local communities. There was, therefore, a need to consider all areas, not just the six principal entry points. He also suggested that the brown tourist signs would not be ideal by any means, and suggested that wider signage issues also had to be addressed, such as signage from sites far from the Park such as Glasgow airport.
 - b. Eleanor Mackintosh supported the view that more than six temporary signs were required and disagreed with the comment in the paper that there was not a strong demand for such signage within local communities in Moray. Eleanor also questioned the timetable for the project.
 - c. Sandy Park and Basil Dunlop both put the suggestion that there were a number of ready-made lay-bys around the borders of the Park which would represent ideal gateway sites. Basil observed that traffic volume on the A939 was equivalent to that on the A95.
 - d. Duncan Bryden suggested that smaller signs might be positioned on the less prominent entry roads to the Park to lessen additional costs.
 - e. Bruce Luffman supported the need for additional temporary signs to be installed and raised the point that if such signs were not white on brown, which did not require planning permission, then there could be planning issues for installation. He also queried who would be responsible for maintaining these signs.
 - f. Bob Wilson commented that there was a problem with the length of time the project as envisaged was taking to come to fruition and there was a consequent requirement to be conscious of local signage requirements. He also queried the costs being quoted for the temporary signs as being too high in the light of recent place name signage undertaken by Moray Council.
 - g. Eric Baird suggested that the delay in commissioning the overall project now afforded the opportunity for additional project evaluation.
12. The Convener summarised the discussion to suggest that there were two key issues for the Board: that temporary signs at only 6 locations was not sufficient, and that the speed of project delivery should be reviewed.

13. Murray Ferguson responded to the point on the number of temporary signs by indicating that, in a context of limited resources for the delivery of the main project, a balance had been sought to establish temporary signage at key entry points while not diverting too much project management resource away from delivery of the core objectives of the full project. The issues arising from addressing the requirements for other signs about the Park would be the key priority for the new Information and Interpretation Officer once recruited. Debbie Strang also clarified that costs for the temporary signs had been developed from quotes received from BEAR, to comprise metal signs, which could also have a logo or brand identification on it, mounted on two metal posts. As a result of a meeting with Angus Council, proposals for pre-arrival signage had moved forward and it had been agreed that a small blue logo could be developed for adding to brown tourist signs. In terms of the project timetable, it had been assumed in preparing the Board paper that, provided the relevant funding package was agreed and that necessary permissions were in place, the granite markers would begin to be erected from Summer 2005.
14. Murray Ferguson also highlighted the sensitivities involved in the project with regard to rationalisation with existing signage, for example the “You are now in the Highlands” sign near Dinnet. The Board would be kept up to date with these matters. Relevant local authorities would also be contacted with regard to the maintenance of any temporary signs prior to entering into any agreements. On the point of wider signage outside of the Park, Murray raised a question about the degree to which this should be acted upon while infrastructure within the Park was still under development.
15. Duncan Bryden commented on this last point that the signs outside the Park were advertisements for the Park as a whole and what is here as a destination. He also commented that the Board should view the Park as a whole in delivery of the project and in this regard should consider the potential for some quick wins on smaller roads rather than waiting for the first permanent signs to be erected on a larger road with a more complex project management task to be completed before that can be achieved.
16. David Green suggested as strategic guidance from the Board that it should look for a separate, interim project to deliver signage by next Easter. In response to a question from Anne MacLean on the progression of signage at railway stations, Debbie Strang indicated that there was an intention to have a sign at each of five stations within the Park. Debbie was in the process of making contact with authorities in this regard and a meeting had been arranged for the following week.
17. **The paper’s recommendations were agreed as follows:**
 - a. **Noted the developmental work that had been undertaken on the project since July 2004 and that the current cost estimate for the design and implementation of the entry point markers alone had been revised downwards to £908k including VAT. This represented a cost of around £750k to the taxpayer, as the VAT element was circular.**
 - b. **Funding for six interim signs at category A sites (as defined in the Board paper) was authorised at £15,000 including VAT as recommended.**
 - c. **Funding for landscape/design consultants was authorised at £55,000 including VAT as recommended.**

- d. **Noted that the development of a strategic approach to road signage will be an early priority for the new Visitor Information and Interpretation Officer, who would start work in early 2005.**
 - e. **Noted the significant amount of work that had been undertaken by the team on this project.**
18. With regard to the last of the above points, the Convener expressed his thanks to the team for their considerable efforts, which had not gone unnoticed by the Board.
19. **Action:**
- a. **Staff to work with directly elected Board members and Bob Wilson (ex-chair of Gateways and Visitor Information Working Group) to determine the way forward on the number of interim signs and their location, and to report back on this to the Board. The objective, while there is a need to address the concerns of the local communities, is not to target all locations.**

Integrated Land Management Strategy (Paper 2)

20. Fiona Newcombe introduced the paper which sought the Board's approval for a proposed strategy framework through which the CNPA would work with a wide range of public sector partners, land managers and other interests in order to deliver an integrated approach to land management that delivers the four aims of the Cairngorms National Park. The paper had been developed through a great deal of informal discussion with stakeholders and aimed for a long-term strategy whereby land managers would contribute to all four objectives of the Park. Not every land manager would be involved in delivering all four objectives and a balance would be sought across the Park. The Authority would provide support to land managers, for example through integration of schemes and training. The strategy would seek to establish opportunities for all in delivering different units of land management. The Authority's role would be in leading consultation, encouraging collaboration between units and securing public support.
21. A key aim set out in the paper is to develop effective collaborative mechanisms across the CNP for setting land management objectives. In further developing the aims set out in the paper, the Natural Resources Group would engage with the Integrated Land Management Advisory Forum early in the New Year. Future papers would be brought to the Board on the development of process in individual areas.
22. In discussion the following points were made:
- a. Bruce Luffman welcomed the paper and commented that it covered all the key areas. He referred to the recent Estates Seminar where there appeared to remain an apparent barrier between the CNPA and some estates, and mentioned that Jane Hope's summary at the seminar, which was not reflected in the paper, was a requirement to identify what stakeholders actually wanted to achieve.
 - b. Alastair Maclennan commented that the emphasis on consultation inferred by the paper was important but that integrated land management between all aims of the Park would not come through that alone. There was a need to blur the edges between agriculture and other interests, cut through beurocracy and join-up public goods. He expressed some concern over the speed of the process.

- c. David Green commented on the need to break down “silos” of different aspects of operation, for example deer management which had not been collaborative to date.
- d. Stuart Black welcomed paper and the interest shown by local communities in land management within their areas. It was important that the diverse communities across the Park informed CNPA of the forms of public goods they wanted out of farming.

[Anne Maclean left the meeting at this point, 14:35]

- e. Marcus Humphrey commented that each individual land management unit was run as a business and as such it would be very difficult to integrate such a wide variety of businesses. Many may already be contributing to CNPA objectives and the Board should be careful not to put up more barriers to land managers.
- f. Eleanor Mackintosh suggested a key focus should be on getting buy-in from land managers, and that forum used should not become a talking shop. In this regard, Eleanor supported Alastair’s concern on the speed of the process, a point also supported by Sheena Slimon.
- g. In response to a question from Eric Baird on the timetable to progress initiatives identified in paragraph 11 of the report, Fiona Newcombe indicated that priorities would be fed back to the working group.

23. The Convener summarised the discussion as identifying that collaboration was a positive provided that this was not gained in a monolithic or slow manner. There was a requirement for more effective interaction between the Board and staff in taking this forward; for a timetable to be determined by the team which would take these issues forward more quickly; and that there was a need to pay for public goods.

24. Fiona Newcombe responded that policy statements would be drawn up which would avoid more paperwork and delays in processes. There was also a need to review the manner in which current schemes operated as, for example, many grant schemes imposed delays. There is also a need to consider appropriate reward schemes for provision of public goods.

25. **The paper’s recommendations were agreed as follows:**

- a. **Noted that the CNPA should work towards a long-term vision for the area in which land is managed in an integrated manner in order to deliver a wide range of private and public interest management objectives in line with the aims for CNP set down by government in the founding legislation.**
- b. **Agreed that in order to achieve this the CNPA should work with land managers and other interests in order to achieve an effective dialogue between all interests so as to agree management objectives for individual management units through an inclusive and transparent consultative process. In this regard, the Board also agreed the need for caution in implementing this in order to ensure streamlined, sensitive and effective dialogue.**
- c. **That in order to enable delivery of these management objectives, agreed the CNPA should work with partner agencies and other interests in order to achieve effective publicly (and perhaps privately) funded incentive schemes across all land use types in the CNP.**
- d. **Agreed that further, more detailed strategy and policy papers arising from this framework paper should be developed by staff, involving Board**

members, and brought to the Board within a timeframe which recognises the Board's concerns over the speed of the process.

Annual Report and Accounts (Paper 4)

26. Daniel Alexander and Denby Pettitt introduced this paper which presented the Annual Report and Accounts for 2003/04 to the Board.
27. Daniel Alexander highlighted to the Board the intention to publish an accessible guide in March, following approval of next year's Corporate Plan and in line with the Board's discussion in June on the CNPA communication strategy.
28. Denby Pettitt indicated that the Accounts were presented to the Board for information at this point. The format of presentation was broadly prescribed. The external auditor had now confirmed a clear audit report and had highlighted 2 actions requiring management attention. The future timetable was for the Chief Executive to sign-off the accounts on 6 December and for the external Auditors, Audit Scotland, to subsequently submit the accounts and their management report to the Scottish Executive and Auditor General by 10 December.
29. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a. David Selfridge suggested that individual Board member's attendance at Board meetings should be identified in the annual report, rather than a total number of attendees at each meeting. Sheena Slimon commented that this point was particularly pertinent for elected members, for whom the electorate would wish to be reassured of their attendance. Bruce Luffman suggested that as all Board members were paid to undertake their duties, the change should cover all Board members.
 - b. A number of amendments to Board members' biographies in both the Annual Report and Accounts were identified.
30. **The paper's recommendations were agreed as follows:**
 - a. **Noted the Annual Report for 2003/04, to include a record of individual Board member's attendance at Board meetings and Planning Committee meetings.**
 - b. **Noted that external audit fieldwork on accounts for 2003/04 is complete.**
 - c. **Noted that, following final amendments, the Accounts would be signed by the Chief Executive as the Accountable Officer and sent with the Independent Auditor's report to the Scottish Executive.**
 - d. **Agreed that Audit Scotland's report on the 2003/04 audit should be considered by the Board's Audit Committee.**
 - e. **Approved proposals to publish an accessible guide to the organisation's activities in March, following approval of next year's Corporate Plan.**
31. **Actions:**
 - a. **Daniel Alexander to amend Annual Report to include identification of number of Board meetings and Planning Committee meetings attended by each member, and to revise biographies where required.**
 - b. **Denby Pettitt to revise biographies in Accounts.**

Board Meetings in 2005 (Paper 3)

32. Andy Rinning introduced the paper, which presented a proposed schedule of Board and Committee meetings for 2005. For Planning Committee meetings in particular, an attempt had been made to reflect the demands on the Planning Group's time and schedule a number of meetings in or near Ballater.
33. Bruce Luffman commented that, while he appreciated the demands on staff time, a previous meeting in Ballater had required two members to participate by telephone in order to be quorate as a result of bad weather. The Committee may therefore experience difficulties from weather conditions in January and February in particular. Eric Baird commented that the difficulties could potentially be more acute if weather prevented staff attendance at a venue some distance from their base. Board members could try to travel to venues the evening prior to meetings if poor weather was forecast.
34. **The paper's recommendations were agreed as follows:**
- a. Approved the schedule of Board and Committee meetings for 2005.**
 - b. Agreed that Staffing and Recruitment Committee meetings should be called as required during 2005 until an established cycle of business is established.**

AOCB

35. There were no other items of business.

Date of Next Meeting

36. 14 January 2005 at Aviemore.