
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at the Village Hall, Boat of Garten on Friday 4th September at 11.30am

PRESENT

Peter Argyle	Eleanor Mackintosh
Eric Baird	Ian MacKintosh
Stuart Black	Anne MacLean
Duncan Bryden	Alastair MacLennan
Jaci Douglas	Mary McCafferty
Dave Fallows	William McKenna
Lucy Grant	Fiona Murdoch
David Green(Convener)	Andrew Rafferty
Marcus Humphrey	Gregor Rimell
Bob Kinnaird	Richard Stroud

In Attendance:

Jane Hope
Andrew Harper
Murray Ferguson
Andy Rinning
Pete Crane

Apologies:

Sue Walker
Geva Blackett
Drew Hendry

Welcome and Introduction

1. David Green welcomed everyone to the meeting in Boat of Garten, noting that the open evening the night before had been held at Nethy Bridge Community Hall, where the community had explained a number of initiatives taking place, including "Nethy going Greener", the Nethy e-newsletter, and the garden tours. A number of these initiatives had been supported by the CNPA, but importantly they all reflected the energy, motivation and enthusiasm of the community, for which they were congratulated. There were a number of strands to the going greener campaign being co-ordinated by the Community Company, including energy conservation measures in houses, the hall, and new forms of energy generation.

Minutes of Last Meeting – approval

2. The minutes of the meeting held on 10th July 2009 were approved with no changes. In response to questions, there were two points of clarification:
 - a) Page 9 paragraph 20. The statement in the minutes that the alternative route being proposed had been considered by the SNH Board before advising Ministers, was confirmed as the case; Scottish Government had confirmed that Ministers were aware.
 - b) Page 10 paragraph 23(b). It was confirmed that the reference to the judgement being taken into account in the Minister's decision was indeed a reference to the judgement made by the reporter following a Public Inquiry (as referred to in the previous sentence of the minutes). It was also confirmed that SNH and Ministers had been aware of the judgement.

Matters Arising

3. None

Declarations of Interest

4.
 - a) Willie McKenna declared an interest in the second recommendation of paper 2 as an employee of Rothiemurchus Estate. He therefore proposed to withdraw from the discussion on the second part of the paper.
 - b) Stuart Black declared an indirect interest for noting in paper 2 as a director of Explore Abernethy.

Cairngorms Business Partnership (Paper 1)

5. Andrew Harper introduced the paper which updated the Board on progress towards a pan-park model for collaborative business working, and sought approval for associated funding, tied to specified deliverables. Since the previous discussion by the board in May, Andrew Harper had been devoting two days a week to working with the business organisations to put together a programme of pan-park actions which could be funded by the five public sector partners. He had also been working with the business sector to help put in place the arrangements for establishing the new business organisation for the Park into which the various participating organisations could merge, and ultimately individual businesses could join. Good progress had been made and there was to be a meeting on the 11th September of the participating organisations to approve the transitional arrangements; the intention was then to move to full and formal establishment of the new Cairngorms Business Partnership on 1st April 2010.
6. The main points made in discussion were as follows:
 - a) The paper was welcomed as one of the most significant pieces of work the CNPA had undertaken. It had huge potential to deliver real benefits for the economy within the National Park, and to deliver elements of the National Park Plan. It represented genuine partnership both between businesses and between the public and private sector.
 - b) It was important to provide the emerging new organisation (thereafter referred to as CBP) with sufficient leverage and critical mass to get up and running. It was therefore suggested that payments of the proposed grant should preferably all been done through the shadow CBP Board who should then deploy those funds in accordance with what had been proposed, recognising the input and contribution from the participating organisations. This had been proposed at the Finance Committee that morning.
 - c) It was good to see financial contributions being made by a range of partners. The proposed £70,000 from the CNPA was a large amount but was money well spent in view of the potential gains. It was acknowledged that there were inevitably some risks of non delivery, as with any project. It was therefore emphasised that adequate monitoring arrangements should be put in place but very much with a view to working with and assisting the emerging new organisation and not just to scrutinise use of money. The Finance Committee therefore suggested that the recommendations be modified slightly so that the performance review meetings should be through the Finance Committee, and take place more regularly than simply a one off in January. It would be helpful if the review meeting could engage key members of CBP as well as CNPA officers. It was also suggested that appropriate discussions at strategic level should be held from time to time to keep all the funding partners engaged as well. The Finance Committee also noted with approval that paragraph 12a recommended that payments would not be made in advance of need, meaning that monies would only be released on confirmation of projects; there was no implication of a blank cheque, while at the same time recognising that grant payments would need to be made sympathetically in relation to cash flow.
 - d) A number of business groupings had already committed to the single CBP (notably the Chamber of Commerce, the ACDMO, Glenlivet and the Cairngorms being the largest of these). The RDDMO was yet to take a view on whether or not to join the single organisation. The £15,000 referred to in the

- expenditure justification as potential payable to the RDDMO would only be so if it was undertaking pan-park work.
- e) It was noted that the intention was that the creation of a single organisation would still enable activities and groupings to recognise the different localities and destinations within the National Park.
 - f) There was some discussion about measures of success. This could be assessed in a number of ways including the delivery of the outputs set out in the attached paper; the successful establishment of the new business model incorporating a number of the existing business groupings; and increasing numbers of members of the new organisation. It was noted, however, that success would not be instant and one had to be realistic. Some of the best benefits may well be medium to long term and it was important to make it clear that we were not looking for quick fixes; better to have a firm base established in order to have success long term.
 - g) A comment had been recorded during the strategic review of National Parks that Park Authorities had to be bolder and braver. The work with the CBP was a good example of being bolder and braver, and being an enabler. Because this was a new form of partnership, and because a considerable amount of money was involved, there could be a role for the Audit Committee in ensuring best value.
 - h) Measuring success would include the obvious measures such a visitor satisfaction, but longer term should also look to see how the new arrangements help to create wealth, employment etc and the leverage in terms of grant aid put in and well created. Some of these measures should come through monitoring the current and future National Park Plan.
 - i) Paragraph 9 of the annex referred to the deliverables in impact assessment. On customer satisfaction it was noted that the ACDMO had specifically included feedback from those with disabilities. This was welcomed and the importance of continuing to include this when the work went pan-park was stressed.
 - j) While tourism was the major business interest in the area the CBP would need to be about more than just tourism businesses. The composition of the CBP Board would need to take account of non tourism interests but given that one of the key players in taking the CBP forward was Duncan MacKellar, a partner in an engineering company and major employer in the area, it was clear that the risk of the CBP being tourism only was very small. The risk of lack of buy from other businesses was noted but that was an issue for the CBP itself and for the reasons given it was felt to be small. Those involved knew that the biggest challenge was to get the membership increased and this in turn depended on being able to ensure that all interests were catered for and could benefit from the organisation.
 - k) The CNPA, and hopefully other public sector partners, would continue to give support to the CBP but the nature of that support was likely to change as time went on. This project was not just about an existing organisation but developing a new concept and a new partnership between private and public sector as well across the private sector. It was anticipated that CNPA would not be expected to fund the organisation in perpetuity and as the organisation's membership increased the financial contributions from the public sector would reduce. But this did not mean withdrawal of support, merely that the support would take a different form. It was essential there was ongoing strategic support from the CNPA and from other partners. Both the CBP and COAT were examples of

how the CNPA could “let go” by developing new partnerships that were freestanding, better able to deliver than the CNPA itself.

- l) In developing the new partnership arrangement there would be implications for the staffing structure of the CNPA. In agreeing that the CBP would undertake the various strands of work as set out in the paper, the clear implication was that the CNPA would not duplicate those areas; there would therefore be a shift of focus of staff input within the CNPA. The time that Andrew Harper had been devoting to helping with the establishment of the CBP would, following Andrew's departure in early October, have to be found from another source and this was in hand. The CNPA were also looking at the possibility of short term secondments/loans of staff to assist the CBP in its early days.
 - m) On a related point it was noted that a number of delivery teams had been established to bring together partners concerned with delivering the priorities for action set out in the National Park Plan. In the light of experience, two of these had been merged (Tourism and Business, Awareness and Understanding) to create one team and this single delivery team would be able to encompass tourism issues. As with all delivery teams, the CNPA had been looking to encourage a partner to take the chair; CBP may be interested in the chair of this delivery team. It was agreed that the terms of reference should enable chairs to come from any sector, not just the public sector. The Board were content to agree this change. In doing so it was noted that the remit of the group was more critical than who was in the chair.
7. The Convener summed up by noting there was wide spread support within the CNPA Board for this project which was seen as being bold and innovative, but with adequate and appropriate monitoring and overview arrangements in place. It was important that these were not controlling but were supportive. It was recognised there was risk, but this was manageable. There was a general view that it was sensible to pay all the grant monies to the embryonic CBP who should then ensure delivery in accordance with the agreement, which would match the annex to the paper. It was agreed the Finance Committee should on behalf of the Board meet with officers and ideally some members of the CBP, from time to time for a performance review. Similarly it was agreed that there should be a mechanism for a discussion from time to time with all the partners at a strategic level.
8. **The recommendations of the paper were approved as follows:**
- a) **Noted the significant progress made in developing a pan-park model for collaborative business working;**
 - b) **Approved grant funding of £70,000 for 2009/10 as per the expenditure justification form attached to the paper, subject to the following conditions:**
 - i. **Payments would not be made in advance of need and would require partner contributions for the specified actions to have been secured; and all payments of grant aid to be made through the interim CBP;**
 - ii. **A performance review meeting to be held in January and at other times as appropriate with the Finance Committee;**
 - iii. **Appropriate discussions at strategic level to be held from time to time to keep all partners engaged.**

9. Actions:

- a) Performance review meeting involving Finance Committee to be set up for January 2010 (Jane Hope/Andrew Harper or successor).

Developing a Co-ordinated Approach to Ranger Services in the National Park (Paper 2)

10. Pete Crane introduced the paper which summarised progress and next steps to developing a co-ordinated approach to ranger services since the Cairngorms National Park Authority had agreed to take on the role of providing ranger grants. In part two of the paper, the case for funding the Rothiemurchus Ranger Service was also presented.
11. In reporting on progress to date Pete noted that there was some real changes observable on the ground. There was a much more effective dialogue between rangers and the CNPA on resolving access issues; there was a more focused approach to publicising the outdoor access code; a more co-ordinated approach to relating visitor information to the Park and using the Park brand. He also noted that specific events like the Junior Ranger Camp were very effective in bringing rangers together.
12. The main points made in discussion were as follows:
 - a) It was noted that Aberdeenshire Council were still apparently not fully bought in to the delivery of the collaborative Ranger Project for the National Park. There was a further meeting on the 18th September when it was hoped to make progress. It was noted that the collaborative project was about much more than money and it was hoped that Aberdeenshire Council would recognise the wider and long term benefits for the area as a whole of a collaborative approach.
 - b) More guidance to Rangers on the difficult issues of wild camping and fires would be very beneficial.
 - c) This was another example of how collaborative working could bring benefits. A crucial element was the use of co-ordinated Park-wide approach to a common issue.
13. Direct feedback received by some Board Members was that CNPA administration of the grant was welcomed by services and was encouraging rangers to promote the National Park. The Board noted with approval the work undertaken to date.

[Willie McKenna left the meeting]

14. The Board moved on to consider part two of the paper concerning the grant funding for a Rothiemurchus Ranger Service. Pete Crane explained that up until October 2008 Rothiemurchus Estate had received grant initially from SNH and lastly from the CNPA as well, for a range of outputs concerning visitor management. Rothiemurchus had chosen to use Rangers to deliver these outputs although technically the funding was not a ranger grant. That grant ended on the expectation of the SRDP grant being able to fund the same outputs however in the event the SRDP grant awarded to Rothiemurchus was for the protection and the enhancement of the forest and a gap was left in respect of the education and management of visitor role which had been delivered by rangers. Hence the estate had applied to the CNPA for a grant to cover this. The question for the

Board was to consider whether this was best used to funds to deliver the National Park Plan objectives in that area of the Park, and whether a precedent was being set.

15. The main points made in discussion were as follows:

- a) The Finance Committee discussions earlier that morning had recorded disappointment at there being no funding for this through the SRDP and recognised the pressures on the Estate. On the basis that Estate had received funding previously the committee did not see that the proposal constituted a new Ranger Service.
- b) The Finance Committee also noted that 18 months was a far ahead as the CNPA could commit. A review after 9 months was sought as to how best synergies and better co-ordination could be obtained through the collaborative approach to the different ranger services across the Park. It was more than likely there would be budget cuts in the future so it was essential to start looking now for how to get efficiencies in the future.
- c) This was quite clearly not setting a precedent by funding a new service. The Rothiemurchus Ranger Service had been there for some time. The vagaries of the SRDP had caused the funding issue. Awarding the funding as proposed in the paper was bringing the Rothiemurchus Ranger Service in to line with more general practice across the Park rather than it being a precedent.
- d) This was a very good opportunity to include in awarding of the grants the requirement for an examination of future opportunities for collaboration particularly in the Glenmore Rothiemurchus area. This in itself would provide an opportunity to encourage the activities of the Ranger Services to be looked at in the broader sense when considering collaboration. In the past rangers had to some extent been held back by the demands of the public sector which had been narrowing rather than broadening.
- e) The fact that the SRDP did not cover social inclusion/welcome/visitor interaction measures was unhelpful and should be fed back to the Scottish Government.

16. **The Board approved the recommendations of the paper as follows:**

- a) **Noted the work undertaken since May 2008 in developing a coordinated approach to Ranger Services in the National Park.**
- b) **Proved in principle the CNPA offering a ranger grant to Rothiemurchus Estate for the duration of the current Corporate Plan (to March 2011).**
- c) **Agreed that there should be a report back to the Finance Committee after 9 months (by May/June 2010) in respect of the challenges and opportunities of collaboration and co-ordination of ranger activities specifically in the Glenmore/Rothiemurchus area.**

Corporate Plan Monitoring (Paper 3)

National Park Full-Monthly Progress Report 3 (Paper 4)

Audit Committee Draft Annual Report (Paper 5)

Board Meeting Schedule for 2010 (Paper 6)

The above four papers were all for information and were noting with no further questions.

AOCB

17. A round up of members activities was given:

- a) David Green had attended an event at the Festival of Politics in Holyrood looking at the Scottish Parliament 10 years on from devolution.
- b) Duncan Bryden had also attended another event at the Festival of Politics which was a panel discussion on National Parks in Scotland. The CNPA had not been approached by the Carnegie Trust who were organising the event which was disappointing and led to there being no current Board Member representation on the panel. The event revealed high levels of misunderstanding and he concluded that both NPAs needed to consider how to raise the profile of National Parks in the central belt (of about 60 people in the audience only 3 apparently lived in a National Park).
- c) Andrew Rafferty had attended the Highland Council Ward Forum in Laggan which had concentrated on transport. Discussion had ranged over the problems of co-ordinating bus and train travel; buses not arriving on time; the dial bus scheme; and the relevance of information on the gantries on the A9 (the information is apparently co-ordinated from outside the area). In respect of the Heather Hopper there was some criticism that they still did not make provisions for carrying bikes. The point was made that there were a number of reports of the Aviemore bus not making the connection with the Heather Hopper in Tomintoul and the bus company apparently refused to take these complaints seriously. As a general point Andrew suggested that the Ward Forum might benefit from a local slot during which the local community was given the opportunity to make a presentation to the Ward Forum about local activities and issues.
- d) Anne MacLean reported her attendance at a workshop held on the issue of Diversity in Public Appointments. The aim was to get a wider range of people involved in public bodies.
- e) Alastair MacLennan along with David Green, and Andrew Rafferty had attended the Grantown Show and accompanied the Cabinet Secretary Richard Lohead in launching the Farmers Forum.
- f) David Green had attended the launch of the Braemar Castle interpretation display which had been supported by the CNPA.

Date of Next Meeting

18. Friday 30th October 2009 at the Lonach Hall Strathdon.