
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at Panmure Arms Hotel, Edzell on Friday 5th May 2006 at 1.30pm

PRESENT

Eric Baird	Sandy Park
Duncan Bryden	Andrew Rafferty
Basil Dunlop	David Selfridge
Douglas Glass	Sheena Slimon
Angus Gordon	Richard Stroud
Lucy Grant	Andrew Thin
Marcus Humphrey	Susan Walker
Eleanor Mackintosh	Bob Wilson
Alastair MacLennan	Nonie Coultard
William McKenna	

In Attendance:

Jane Hope Fiona	Newcombe
Murray Ferguson	Don McKee
Nick Halfhide	Andy Rinning
Andrew Harper	Francoise van Buuren
Dicken Higgins	

Apologies:

Stuart Black	Anne MacLean
David Green	Gregor Rimell
Bruce Luffman	Ross Watson

Welcome and Introduction

1. The Convenor welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting the apologies as set out above and recording the fact that Ross Watson was representing the CNPA Board at the event being hosted by the Forestry Commission at Glenmore, being attended by the Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development.

Minutes of Last Meeting – approval

2. The minutes of the meeting of 7th April were approved with no changes.

Matters Arising

3. Paragraph 10a – The Board Seminar on the Core Path Plan had been arranged for the 25th August and details would be notified to Members shortly.
Paragraph 10b – Nonie Coultard and Ross Watson had indicated that they wished to sit on the steering group.
Paragraph 10c – In hand
Paragraph 13b – Bruce Luffman and Ross Watson had agreed to sit on the Brand Management Group [in addition to Eleanor Mackintosh already on the group].
Paragraph 17c – Nonie Coultard agreed to sit on the Audit Committee, subject to suitable timing of meetings, bearing in mind the proposal to review Board Meeting arrangements.

The Future of the Cairngorms Moorland Project Demonstration Sites (Paper 1)

[Eleanor Mackintosh declared an interest in the project and left the meeting.]

4. Nick Halfhide and Fiona Newcombe introduced the paper which sought members' views on whether to continue investing in the two demonstration sites associated with the Cairngorms Moorland Project once the project finished in the summer. The CNPA had inherited the project from the Cairngorms Partnership in 2003. The Project was due to come to an end in summer 2006 when the Heritage Lottery Funding finished, and there was some expectation that the CNPA would continue to invest in the demonstration sites for at least another five years. The issue before the Board was whether or not this was best use of public resources, bearing in mind that the National Park Plan, produced in consultation with a wide range of Stakeholders, was proposing a wider programme of work on moorlands, including training through the Land Based Business Training Project and improving public sector support to moorland managers. The recommendation in the paper was that the aims of the Park were best served by investing in this wider range of activities; with the major sources of funding for the Moorlands Project ceasing, it would not be possible to continue both the project and the wider range of activities. Following wide ranging discussions with other Stakeholders, it was clear that other sources of funding to continue investments in the demonstration moors was not forthcoming, and if there had to be a choice, the priority should be to support the wider range of activities, rather than continuing to invest in a demonstration site.
5. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a). Paragraph 16 set out four options. While option A was clearly too expensive, there might be a possibility of continuing investment at one site only, namely Balnaboth, as an exemplar of good practice. This would provide time to find further funding.

- b). Five years was not long enough to really see the benefits of the management practices being tried out on the demonstration sites; at least 10 years would be needed to see an improvement.
- c). Paragraph 12 of the Paper emphasised the need to observe best value. With the Project coming to an end, it was important to review whether it might be better value for public money to spread the benefits more widely. Paragraph 13 suggested that another eight years of investment were needed to properly demonstrate the benefits of the management practices involved in the Project. Over its three year lifetime the project had paid for fencing and for stock reduction. When the project ended in August, future management would be a matter for the landowners/managers. The suggestion in paragraph 13 was that if public money were to be invested to continue observing the effects of the management practices trialled in the project, this would need to be done for a further eight years to be meaningful. The question for the CNPA was whether continuing for a further eight years was indeed the best value for money, or was it to stop that investment now, and allocate that money to other activities.
- d). There was some discussion about what the three years of the Moorland Project had achieved on the two demonstration moors. The Project had not been set up as a scientific study so it was not possible to state categorically the relationship between cause and effect. There was anecdotal evidence of improved heather regeneration, and improvements in quality of livestock. However this could not be proved. It was noted that the original objectives had not been clear enough in this respect so it was now hard to know whether or not the original intentions had been achieved. In any event, three years was always going to be too short a time span to judge effects against background fluctuations. The question was asked as to whether it might be possible to continue funding further monitoring on the moors even if investments in particular management practices ceased. It was noted there had been a mid term evaluation, at some considerable cost. However, this had focused less on the "bigger picture" and more on the activities to be undertaken in the second half of the project. The evaluation had concluded that it was too early to claim unequivocally that the management practices had caused a significant improvement in the moor although it did observe some gains, notably in interpretation.
- e). The possibility was raised of continue to invest in the two demonstration moors, but on a new and renegotiated basis.
- f). Paragraph 25 referred to discussions with other organisations about the continuation of the demonstration sites. Two important views had emerged from these discussions. Firstly, these organisations were only prepared to provide further funding for monitoring. Secondly, the complex issue of State Aids rules had arisen and it was clear from discussions with Scottish Natural Heritage and others that continuing the investment in the two demonstration moors beyond the three year life of the project was in severe danger of contravening State Aids rules. Further, there seemed to be no possibility of finding ways of funding the demonstration moors through existing schemes.
- g). It was apparent there was no clear exit strategy identified when the project was set up, other than to leave the decision on the future of the project with the CNPA.
- h). Annex 1 of the paper set out the detailed costs of the Cairngorms Moorland Project over the previous three years. Some of these individual elements, such as stock

reduction and fencing were extremely high and were not sustainable without the input from the Heritage Lottery Fund, but it was clear that further support from this source was not going to be forthcoming.

- i). It had been quite appropriate to take over this project from the Cairngorms Partnership and it had been well understood at the time that the project was limited to three years. Inevitably, thinking had developed in the three years since the creation of the Cairngorms National Park; the CNPA and in particular the development of the National Park Plan had identified the issues to be focused on over the coming five and indeed twenty five years. The decision now was whether or not the Moorlands Project and in particular investment in the two demonstration moors was the best way of delivering that National Park Plan. A recent meeting of the Moorland Forum and interested Stakeholders had made clear that there were other opportunities for demonstrating best practice and interpretation on moorlands. It was important to focus on how best to deliver that requirement now, rather than look back at a situation that had existed three years ago. It was important to move on. If the option of continuing to invest in just one of the sites was pursued, this would require a doubling of what the CNPA was proposing to put into moorlands work. While clearly there would be some disappointment at ceasing to invest in the two existing demonstration moors, this looked like the best option in the current circumstances. Continuing to invest in a wide range of other activities associated with moorlands would meet the Park aims, would meet what was proposed in the National Park Plan, and would not preclude Land Managers from continuing to invest in the two demonstration moors.
- j). The two demonstration moors have been introduced as exemplars of good practice, but this was of limited value if all that was being demonstrated was that such good practice requires continuing investment at the levels shown in Appendix 1. If investment was not going to continue in the two demonstration moors, it was important to be clear what else would be done instead.
- k). There was some discussion as to how much investment would be required to keep the demonstration moors going, and in particular whether the payments for stock reduction would be necessarily as high as shown in Annex 1. There was some suggestion from others that the costs of stock reduction could be much lower than the £105,000 (over three years) shown. It could be argued that continuing investment in the two demonstration moors was good value for public money given that it would be continuing the benefit of money already invested over three years. If the investment stopped, the owners/managers would have no financial incentive for continuing the stock reductions, and there appeared to be no likelihood of getting these incentives through other schemes.
- l). It was dangerous to speculate on what the cost of stock reduction could be; the only knowns were actual costs as identified during the project. Indeed, if suggestions were being made that stock reduction could be achieved for lower amounts than had been paid during the three years of the project, this seemed to imply that the landowners/managers had been prepared to argue for more money than was actually necessary to facilitate the project.
- m). Clearly there had been some short comings in the way the project had been set up. That said, the project had now come to an end, and the proposals at paragraph 33 to

bring more detailed proposals to the Board on future moorland work later in the year, were welcomed.

- n). Paragraph 8 set out the three objectives of the Moorlands Project. Option (c) (Raising Awareness) was something that would be delivered through other activities. Given the CNPA's remit as an essentially enabling organisation, it was difficult to support options (a) and (b). Clearly the CNPA would wish to promote good practice, and this should be done through other organisations such as SNH, Game Conservancy Trust.
 - o). Having invested money in the demonstration moorlands for the last three years, it might be worth investigating continued monitoring in conjunction with SNH. It was recognised that the project had never been set up as a scientific trial, but rather to "tell a story". Further investment in monitoring would need to be thought through carefully, as it was likely to have a fairly limited focus.
6. In summing up the discussion, the Convenor identified three streams of argument:
 - a). With the conclusion of the Moorlands Project, public sector funding and in particular CNPA funding would be better spent furthering a broad range of activities as set out in National Park Plan.
 - b). With public funding having been invested for the previous three years, there was some expectation that the management of the moors should continue. There was an argument that having put in place the infrastructure, landowners/managers should continue the management practices of the project if these were giving benefits such as higher grouse numbers (for which there was some anecdotal evidence). The willingness of landowners/managers to continue stock reduction might well depend on funding and although discussions with Scottish Executive had not proved fruitful to date, it might be possible to investigate further whether existing schemes could provide for this.
 - c). The possibility of continuing to monitor changes on one or both of the moorlands should be pursued with SNH.
 7. In further discussion the point was made that any further investment in monitoring would need to come out of monies put aside in the CNPA budget for moorlands as a whole; this was not large. It was also suggested that while it had been quite correct to take over this project from the Cairngorms Partnership, there were important lessons about project management, namely to make sure that in the future projects started by the CNPA had an exit strategy, had clear objectives, and were very clear about the finite duration.
 8. **The Board approved the recommendation of the Paper as follows:**
 - a) **The Board agreed not to invest further in either demonstration sites beyond the terms of the current Moorland Project, but further to this concluded that staff should follow up two matters:**
 - b) **Further discussion with the Scottish Executive about the possibility of stock reduction payments through existing schemes; and**
 - c) **Investigate the potential for further monitoring work in conjunction with SNH.**

[Eleanor Mackintosh returned, Andrew Rafferty departed]

Integrated Grants Project – First Year Update (Paper 2)

9. Dicken Higgins introduced the paper which reported on progress on the first year of the Integrated Grants Programme and sought the Board's view on whether to change the current practice of requiring applicants to find at least 10% of funds for their project. He noted that a lot of positive feedback had been received about the programme. In year one, funds had been committed to 66 projects worth £341,000, mainly in the areas of marketing and events, investing in communities and cultural heritage. Applications had been made for other streams within the programme, but these were taking a longer time to come to fruition. There had been good press coverage on a range of individual projects. At the completion of the first year, the estimate was now that overall the programme would fund 100 projects worth £500,000. So far there had been 79 applications, and around 400 enquiries. The 1st October 2006 would be the closing date for new projects, and it was noted that for some streams within the programme available funding was almost fully committed. SNH had contributed £50,000 to co finance certain projects in 06/07 under the schemes for Interpretation, Outdoor Access and Biodiversity. This was welcomed, and had enabled some Leader+ money to be focussed on other schemes that did not receive this additional funding.

10. On the question raised by the Board previously on whether or not communities should be required to provide 10% of the total project funding in cash, the paper set out the arguments at paragraph 8 – 11. The conclusion was that communities were generally currently able to raise the 10% of cash, and there was no significant demand for making payment in kind. The recommendation was therefore to leave current practice unchanged. It was noted that Leader+ rules did not allow for payment in kind, so any change to the rules on the Integrated Grants Programme would only have applied to a limited number of projects.

11. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a). Dicken Higgins was congratulated on the way he had administered the programme. One Board member had received comments that this was a complex scheme to get into, but the CNPA has provided a lot of help to applicants, and in particular Dicken had been very good at advising people and pointing them in the right direction.
 - b). The question raised previously by the Board about the 10% cash contributions had been thoroughly investigated and the conclusions at paragraphs 8-10 provided the necessary reassurance. The point was made that the question of contribution in kind was probably a bigger issue on larger projects which tended to take 18 months to two years. So while the question of contributions in kind probably did not apply to the current Integrated Grants Programme, the notion should not be dismissed altogether, and should be born in mind when the future of Grants Programme was considered by the Board.
 - c). Bringing together several organisations under one umbrella Grant Scheme was welcomed. It was noted that the very fact that the CNPA had started this Grant Scheme, albeit for only a period of two years in the first instance, would have generated some expectation of a continuing grant scheme. It would be important to review the future of this grant scheme later in the year specifically in terms of its

value as a tool for delivering the National Park Plan, not just for the CNPA but for all partners.

- d). It was noted that the majority of applications came from the North and West of the Park. Board Members should note that they had a role to play in communicating locally the availability of the programme.

12. The Board agreed the recommendations of the paper as follows:

- a). **Noted the status of the programme and delivering outputs for the end of the financial year 2005/06;**
- b). **Noted progress made in pulling public funds to Grant Aid Park related activities;**
- c). **Agreed to maintain the current practice of requiring applicants to find a least 10% of the funds for projects.**

[David Selfridge departed the meeting]

Sustainable Tourism Action Plan – Annual Update (Paper 3)

13. Andrew Harper introduced the paper which provided the annual update on the Sustainable Tourism Action Plan. He emphasised that the action plan applied to the Park as a whole and to a range of Stakeholders, not just the CNPA. There would be a further annual update in March 2007, but thereafter annual reporting would be through reports on the National Park Plan. Setting targets for the use of the Brand, and specifically update of the Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS) was currently under discussion through the Brand Management Group. Further refinement was clearly needed, but at present the targets being proposed were the following:

- 20% of Quality Assured tourism businesses using the Brand by the end of March 2007;
- At least 25% Quality Assured tourism businesses being GTBS accredited.

14. In discussion the following points were made:

- a). Debbie Strang was thanked and commended for all her hard work on the Sustainable Tourism Project. She was taking a two year career break, and during that time her position would be taken by Chris Taylor of HIE, on secondment.
- b). Reiterating previous discussions at the Board, it was noted that the proposed targets needed refining. For example the expression “business” was too crude and failed to take account of different sizes and consequently different impacts of various businesses. A more meaningful measure, taking account of impact, was needed. In reply, it was pointed out that these were operational outputs targets and were not intended to be impact measures; the latter would be looked at as part of the work taken forward for the whole of the National Park Plan in developing indicators.
- c). Work was also on going looking at the sustainability of tourism from the point of view of the amount of spend remaining within the area.

15. The Board noted the paper

Operational Plan 2005/06 Year End Update (Paper 4)

16. Jane Hope introduced the paper which reported on delivery of the 2005/06 Operational Plan at the close of the year. Progress on the majority of goals remained broadly in line with the intentions set out in the Operational Plan, and delivery of all of the priority one goals was well on course. Four goals had been identified as affected by some changes to the timetable and/or intended delivery plans which posed some risk to delivery of intended outcomes as set out in the Plan. However, overall the year end review of 2005/06 Operational Plan continued to present a generally successful work and resource investment in delivering successful and corporate plan objectives.

17. The Board noted the paper

Corporate Plan Report: Theme 4 (Paper 5)

18. The paper presented an update and forward look on delivering the fourth theme of the Corporate Plan. In discussion the following points were made:

- a). A Board workshop had been arranged for the 26th May to discuss the National Park Plan.
- b). It was confirmed the Norman Brockie would be leaving the Planning Team to take up a post in Southwark Council. His contribution to the Local Plan was commended.
- c). The special Board meeting on 19th May was being held to discuss a housing paper which would be setting out the Board's preferred strategic direction on housing. The intention was to focus the debate on housing in the context of both the Local Plan and National Park Plan. This would be followed on 14th June by a meeting of interested Board Members with the Cairngorms Housing Forum.
- d). Attention was drawn to paragraph 11b of the paper, pointing out a recent statement by the Scottish Executive that local plans require an appropriate assessment under the EU Habitats Directive. The Planning Team were currently discussing this with SNH to find a structured way forward.
- e). The Convenor commended everyone for a very successful launch of the Draft National Park Plan.

19. The Board noted the paper

AOCB

20. Eric Baird and Murray Ferguson briefly reported on their recent visit to an ANPA (Association of National Park Authorities) workshop in Cheltenham on Access and Recreation. A full report on the workshop would be made available in due course, but it was briefly noted that the workshop had flagged up notable differences in the issues facing English and Scottish National Parks, as well as some differences in approach. The sheer size of the Cairngorms National Park in relation to most other English National Parks was clear. National Park Authorities south of the border apparently did not differentiate themselves from the Park in contrast to the distinction that has been drawn in the Cairngorms between entity of the organisation and the area of ground that is designated. The thinking in the Cairngorms was seen as being quite radical in this respect. The access legislation in the two countries was clearly quite different, and the benefits of the clarity and general openness brought by the Scottish approach became

obvious. Further, the practice in the Cairngorms which focused on developing a partnership approach to strategic management of area contrasted with the practice south of the border of focusing on management of bylaws, individual visitor centres etc. The engagement with other National Park Authorities in England and Wales had been extremely useful – there was a lot of good experience to share on both sides.

Date of Next Meeting

21. Friday 19th May, Royal British Legion, Grantown-on-Spey (special Board Meeting to discuss Housing).