
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING **held at Nethy Bridge Community Centre, Nethy Bridge** **on Friday 5th December 2003 at 1.30pm**

PRESENT

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

Ann MacLean
William McKenna
Andrew Rafferty
Gregor Rimell
David Selfridge
Robert Severn
Joyce Simpson
Richard Stroud
Andrew Thin
Susan Walker
Bob Wilson

In Attendance:

Jane Hope
Nick Halfhide

Apologies:

David Green
Alastair MacLennan
Sheena Slimon

Welcome and Introduction

1. Andrew Thin welcomed the public to the meeting and thanked Judy Main for providing the lunch.

Minutes of Last Meeting – approval

2. The minutes of the previous meeting (7th November) were approved with no changes.

Matters Arising

3. The Convenor reported on a number of matters arising:
 - a) Paragraph 7 (a): The draft Code of Conduct had been sent to the Scottish Executive and a response was awaited.
 - b) Paragraph 12 (b): SNH would be able to provide capital funding for a project such as the extension of the Speyside Way.
 - c) Paragraph 18: The Convenor had met the Forestry Commission and Forest Holidays and been told that the reason for the relatively sudden decision on closure of the campsite was that finance had only become available at that point. They had agreed that a better arrangement would have been to start the work in October for completion in the New Year. The current arrangements are for the work to start in March and be completed in June. While new investment in the campsite is unquestionably welcome, the key question is the timing. On the basis that funding could not be carried forward into the next financial year, a number of points had been agreed with the Forestry Commission:
 - Limited temporary arrangements would be made available at Glenmore Lodge;
 - The bulk of visitors in the peak period will phone ahead to book and everyone who rings would be redirected (and not simply told that the campsite would be closed);
 - Comprehensive details would be made available to all potential campers, informing them that the site was closed but giving further information about alternatives.
 - d) Paragraph 20: All members had been asked to let the CNPA office know whether or not they would like to be provided with copies of local papers as a way of keeping them up to date with relevant local issues.

Programme of Board Meetings in 2004 (Paper 1)

4. Jane Hope introduced the paper which set out the proposed programme of Board meetings and Planning Committee meetings in 2004. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) Further details would be added to the programme as these became available. However, one fixed item on the 27th February was a disability awareness training session in the afternoon.
 - b) The principle of holding Board meetings at different venues around the National Park, with open evenings held on the previous evening for the Board to meet with the local communities, would continue. The Convenor suggested that the locally elected Member of the CNPA should be consulted on each occasion on how best to run the evening session. Experience at Laggan had shown how useful it was to hear direct from communities about local issues.
 - c) Particularly in the holiday season it would be very helpful for members to let the office know well in advance if they were unable to attend meetings so that a quorum could be assured.
5. **The paper was agreed.**

Corporate Plan 2004-07 (paper 2)

6. Jane Hope introduced the paper which sought agreement to a draft Corporate Plan covering the period 2004-2007, for submission to Scottish Ministers before Christmas. The paper proposed that when submitted to Scottish Ministers, the covering letter should make clear that this was still a very early stage of the CNPA's existence, and it was consequently difficult to be precise about detailed actions and objectives as these must inevitably flow from the National Park Plan which would take a further eighteen to twenty four months to develop. Nevertheless the Board had devoted a considerable amount of thought to developing a clear sense of long-term strategic objectives. The result was the current draft Corporate Plan and while it would clearly need to be updated it represented the Board's current vision of the CNPA's direction over the next three years and its estimate of funding needed to deliver that.
7. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) The expression "Gateway Centres" should be changed simply to "Gateways", since there was no presumption for new buildings.
 - b) The draft Corporate Plan was realistic and in effect offered to deliver a certain number of outputs to a particular budget. However it was important that the CNPA should have additional projects in mind so that if additional money became available this could be taken advantage of.
 - c) The draft Plan tended to underplay the importance of landscape as an issue in the Park. It was proposed that the Plan included an action point within the next three years of developing a landscape character assessment.
 - d) Under "Programmes of Youth Involvement" add a reference to youth organisations along with schools.
8. **The draft Corporate Plan was agreed subject to minor amendments as set out above.**
9. **Action:**
 - a) **Jane Hope to submit the draft Corporate Plan to the Scottish Executive.**

Feedback from Autumn Conferences (oral report)

10. Bob Wilson reported on his attendance at the ANPA (Association of National Park Authorities Conference) held in the Brecon Beacons National Park, on the theme of "Living Communities". David Selfridge reported on his attendance at the Europarc Conference held in Norway, on the theme of Sustainable Economic Development in Europe's protected areas. Finally, Nick Halfhide reported on the World Parks Congress held in September in Durban. While there had been no representative of the CNPA at the Durban conference there had been a small Scottish delegation, including Isobel Glasgow (LLTT NPA Board Member) and Tessa Jones, Highland Council Ranger (the CNPA contributed to her attendance).

First Anniversary Events (paper 3)

11. Nick Halfhide introduced the paper which sought the Board's agreement for the range of Community-based events for the CNPA to promote during 2004 to mark the 1st Anniversary of the Park. The proposals had been brought forward by a sub-group comprising Maureen Ferrier, Bob Wilson, Lucy Grant. The proposals essentially comprised three types:
 - A grant scheme to support community based groups to put on activities and events during the summer.
 - Photography and poetry competitions during the first part of 2004 for a 2005 calendar.
 - Encouragement to all the sports and recreation clubs in the Park to put on special events and competitions in 2004.

The proposed programme was ambitious. It would be possible to do more but this would take considerable time and effort. What the paper proposed was a realistic assessment of what could be done within the available resources.

12. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) The 10th anniversary of the CNPA could be used to encourage the world's National Parks to come to Scotland.
 - b) The proposals were relatively light on art and culture and more thought could be given to encouraging art and dance as well as the sport and recreation clubs.
 - c) The question was raised on how decisions would be made on how to award funding. This was always a difficulty whenever running grant schemes. If on a first come first served basis. If on a first come first served basis, it would be important to encourage good quality applications as soon as possible.
 - d) The events should be planned to give a special focus to demonstrating that the Park was all inclusive. There were a number of way of achieving this, for example, through conditions set on the grants, and through groups being encouraged to put on events encompassing all abilities.
 - e) Originally a number of Members had been concerned about the perception that these events could be seen as backward looking. It was important to get the focus of these events right. This would not be a birthday celebration for the Board; it would be about providing benefits for the communities within the National Park. Events should be about celebrating the National Park and looking forward rather than looking back to the first year.
 - f) The events needed to be imaginative and realistic. They should also aim at supporting and affirming what communities were already doing.
 - g) This should be less about marking the first anniversary of the National Park and more about marking the diversity within the National Park. The title should possibly be e.g. A Year of Community Activity.
 - h) It would be important to ask communities how they would like to mark the first year of the National Park rather than for the CNPA to impose its ideas.
 - i) Other suggestions were put forward: for example, the events could be used to celebrate the opening of the Park. Alternatively they could also be used to simply celebrate the communities being within the National Park.

13. **The Paper was agreed subject to the Working Group integrating the points made above into its thinking.**

14. **Action:**
a) **The Working Group to report back to the Board in due course as it worked out its proposals.**

Working Groups - Updates (oral update)

15. Nick Halfhide gave an oral report on progress with the eleven Working Groups which the Board had agreed to set up. Four of these Working Groups were on hold awaiting the arrival of new staff. The other groups had met once or twice and minutes had been made available. It had proved very difficult to timetable the meetings of the groups so that there were no clashes for individual Members and to inform all Members of all meeting times and dates. It was still early days and the arrangements were settling down. Nick Halfhide asked Members to let him know how well the arrangements were working.
16. He posed a number of questions for Members. Should minutes be on the website? What was the best way of Working Groups reporting back to the Board and keeping Members updated? Minutes needed to be dealt with carefully - on the one hand they were an important way of keeping everyone abreast of discussions within Working Groups; on the other hand, particularly if minutes were written succinctly, people reading them who were not at the meeting could misconstrue what had been said.
17. **It was agreed that:**
a) **Minutes from Working Groups would be put on the CNPA website.**
b) **Nick Halfhide and Jane Hope would consider standardising the preparation of minutes from Working Groups.**

Staffing and Recruitment Committee - Update (oral update)

18. The Convenor reported on progress in recruitment of the Heads of Group. The interview process had been completed with the assistance of the recruitment consultant and the interview panel drawn from the Staffing and Recruitment Committee. Four appointments were proposed. He could not yet confirm the names as the individuals concerned still had to confirm their acceptance. The names of the successful candidates would be made know to Members as soon as possible. In addition a pack of information showing the complete staff organisation, who's who, and a short paragraph about each member of staff would be circulated to Members in due course. The use of external recruitment consultants in the process had been very valuable as they clearly had brought an open and dispassionate approach to the whole process. As a result four very good candidates were being appointed to these important posts.
19. Nine posts were being recruited at tier two and tier three, and an advert had been placed in the local and national press the previous week. The process of recruiting staff would continue over the next two years. From now on it would be a cautious and incremental approach. Now the senior management team was in place the open competition for recruitment of the Chief Executive would start. The Staffing and Recruitment Committee would meet early in the New Year to move this forward.

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20. The Convenor reported that there was a debate proposed by John Farquhar Munro, MSP within the Scottish Parliament, about altering the Gaelic name of the Cairngorms National Park. The issue of the Gaelic name for the National Park was one for the Gaelic speakers and scholars. There was no reason for the CNPA to consider this further unless Gaelic speakers requested it. To date, the Convenor had received considerable support for the Gaelic name being retained as proposed, incorporating 'Mhonaidh Ruaidh'.

Date of Next Meeting

21. 16th January 2004 in the Braemar Village Hall, Braemar.