

Cairngorms National Park Authority Integrated Land Management Advisory Forum

DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING

1pm, 6th March 2006, Nethybridge Hotel

Present

Alastair MacLennan (Chair), Andy Wells, Nick Halfhide, Steve North, Edward Mountain, Drennan Watson, Frank Law, Eric Baird, Will Boyd-Wallis (Minutes), Eleanor Mackintosh, Colin Shedden, Lucy Grant, Iain Hope, Steve Smith, Fiona Newcombe, Vicky Thomson, Alastair MacLennan, Richard Cooke, John Grant, John Moffat, Nick Halfhide, Simon Thorpe.

Apologies

Adam Smith, Alistair Laing, Anne Rae, Basil Dunlop, Bob Dunsmore, Bruce Luffman, Calum Kippen, David Bale, David Balharry, Eoin Smith, Gregor Rimell, Helen McDade, Ian Francis, James Innes, Jeremy Usher Smith, Kathy Peebles, Kenny Taylor, Marina Dennis, Nicola Abrams, Robert MacDonald, Roy Dennis, Sandy Park.

Welcome and Introduction

1. The Chairman welcomed everyone, and thanked them for giving up their valuable time. In particular new faces to the forum, with a moorland interest, were thanked for coming along to discuss the Moorland Project. He emphasised the importance of this time in development of the National Park Plan which coincides with progress on the Scottish Rural Development programme.

Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

2. The wording on reimbursing versus rewarding land managers for public benefits was raised as a matter for discussion. This was covered later on in the meeting. Otherwise there were no issues raised with the minutes. All action points had been attended to.

National Park Plan – update and role of the ILMAF (Paper 1)

3. Nick Halfhide and Fiona Newcombe presented an update on Progress with the Park Plan, highlighting the seven draft Priorities for Action. Previous involvement of the forum in developing the Park Plan was noted and appreciated. The official public consultation will be launched on 11th April. It is anticipated that the Plan will be approved by ministers at the end of the year. Submitting the Plan alongside the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Plan will add strength to the voice of National Parks in Scotland.

4. Summary of comments and issues covered in the forum:

- a) The Park Plan is everybody's plan, not just CNPA or other agencies; it is vital that land managers take every opportunity to input.
- b) The Park Plan (once approved by Ministers) will be a statutory document guiding the work of all the relevant agencies in supporting land management.
- c) It must be fully recognised that land owners and occupiers are vital to the delivery of the Park Plan.
- d) The Plan must be adequately funded, but in order to obtain that funding, it is necessary to present a robust case. The importance of 'social learning' was raised alongside the need for skilful facilitation in gathering views.
- e) "Hydrology" was broadly recognised as a very important issue that cuts across almost every aspect of the Park Plan. It is well covered in the draft Park Plan, but some suggested that it is as critical an issue as many of the seven Priorities for Action.
- f) It was requested that in the introduction to the Park Plan, its position in relation to other national policies and legislation should be clarified.
- g) In raising both National and Local interest in the Park Plan, Nick Halfhide outlined the variety of publicity measures that would be used, pointing out that CNPA would continue to work with a very wide variety of interest groups.
- h) On the issue of reimbursing/rewarding land managers, Fiona Newcombe pointed out that these words can mean different things to different people and that the word "support" was used extensively to cover a whole range of support measures.
- i) It was agreed that updates on the action programmes for ILM, deer, biodiversity and landscape priorities for action would be brought to future ILMAF meetings.

The Scottish Rural Development Regulation (Paper 2)

5. Fiona Newcombe presented a paper on the development of the Scottish Rural Development Programme. She emphasised that it presented both threats and opportunities for land managers in the National Park. The SRD Strategic Plan is under consultation now and the SRD Programme will be out for consultation between April and June. There is still uncertainty about how regionalisation will be approached, but there is a strong case of National Parks being considered as distinct regions.

6. Summary of comments and issues covered in the forum:

- a) Great concern was expressed about the importance of the Single Farm Payment and the Less Favoured Areas Support Scheme to farmers and the need to ensure that funding through Land Management Contracts in Tiers 2 and 3 is also adequate to ensure the continued benefits provided by active land management.
- b) We have to face harsh realities. This will be a time of great change in the countryside requiring everyone to be radical, imaginative, adaptable and innovative in finding ways to maintain a thriving local economy.

- c) There is a need for systems to be changed so that grant money is delivered “up-front” to ensure continued investment.
- d) It was noted that it is often overlooked that the production of “food” is a public benefit.
- e) It was noted that modulated funds are matched by the UK treasury and there is a need to ensure that this continues. The possibility of claiming back modulated funds back into the National Park was discussed.
- f) CNPA need to consider a range of scenarios if the support does not prove to be adequate for land management. Fiona Newcombe emphasised that this is being done and that CNPA are working hard to influence the best possible future for farming within the National Park.
- g) It was noted that businesses will have to work on a viable economic scale and that many businesses may be too small to cope with the change.
- h) It was recommended that the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group be added to the Forum.
- i) On the issue of regionalisation it was emphasised that there is a need for a collective view and that it would be beneficial if everybody lobbied for the National Park as a distinct region.
- j) It was requested that CNPA continue to feed-back to the forum.

Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group

7. Will Boyd-Wallis updated the forum on plans to initiate a Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group, welcoming comments. In summary, the purpose of the group is to get a wide range of interests in the subject of deer management around the table on a regular basis to inform the development of long term, integrated deer management within the National Park.
8. The CDAG will consist of approximately 20 people from a wide range of interest groups including: deer managers, public agencies (CNPA, DCS, SNH, SEERAD, FCS), local communities, Scottish Gamekeepers Association, British Deer Society, Scottish Environment LINK (covering both access and conservation), the research community and tourism. The effective delivery of deer management depends very much upon the deer managers; as a result roughly half of the members will be from that sector. The first meeting of the CDAG is to be on 25th April 2006.
9. “The sustainable management of deer” is identified as one of seven “Priorities for Action” within the current draft of the Park Plan. An immediate role for CDAG will be to assist in the development of a Strategic Deer Plan for the National Park and to provide advice on the range of views that may well be received during the park plan consultation.
10. Summary of comments and issues covered in the forum:
 - a) There was some discussion about whether or not deer management should be a priority for action.
 - b) The significance of being able to manage whole ecosystems by managing deer, a dominant herbivore, was recognised.

- c) It was recognised that there are high costs involved in managing deer and hence there was some debate over the value of deer management to the local economy.
- d) It was concluded that deer management is a Priority for Action, but should not be at the expense of other important issues such as, hydrology.

Moorland Project

- 11. Eleanor Mackintosh registered her personal interest in the Moorland Project.
- 12. Nick Halfhide provided an update on the Moorland Project welcoming comments and advice. There are considerable funding challenges in taking forward the 3 year project which was due to be completed this year. The current proposal, which will be decided upon by the CNPA board in April, is to:
 - a) continue to manage the two demonstration moors at Balnaboth and Blairfindy.
 - b) work with farmers to fund stock reduction through RSS or Scottish Executive research project.
 - c) Develop policy work on uplands, with particular focus on developing and implementing upland schemes, to be taken forward by as part of a new post within the Land Management Group.
 - d) Take forward interpretative work on moorlands though other existing delivery bodies such as rangers and land managers.
- 13. Summary of comments and issues covered in the forum:

Agricultural Waste Project

- 14. Will Boyd-Wallis reported on the on the latest developments in the Agricultural Waste Project and welcomed ideas for sustaining the project into the future.
- 15. Twenty-two farms were involved in the December uplift of farm plastics. Over 20 tonnes of plastic were collected from 6 collection points in: Nethybridge, Kingussie, Kincaig, Glenlivet, Dinnet and Strathdon. This was a relatively costly exercise. The intention is to find a more cost effective method for future uplifts.
- 16. Progress on the project was welcomed by the forum. It was noted that both SEPA and the NFU have produced useful guidance leaflets on disposal of agricultural waste.

Communications Grant Scheme

- 17. Will Boyd-Wallis informed the forum about the new grant scheme aimed specifically at supporting land managers in their efforts. The grant is aimed at assisting land managers to inform the public about their role in delivering public benefits, but more importantly it is aimed at encouraging feedback from the public and giving them more of an opportunity to influence what happens on the ground.

Dates for future meetings

18. Future formats of meetings were discussed. Will Boyd-Wallis emphasised that it is very important that the members of the forum get something out of it and that it was never intended to only be of assistance to CNPA. There was some interest expressed in having site visits which may have relevance to specific issues covered in future meetings. There would be no obligation to attend, but the option may be available on future occasions.

19. Intended future meeting dates:

9th May 2006

8th August 2006

7th November 2006

Any Other Business

20. The importance of hydrology was again emphasised and it was suggested that both SEPA and Scottish Water be invited to attend the Forum. It was noted that a SEPA member of staff is currently invited to attend the forum. The membership of the forum is under review; Will Boyd-Wallis would welcome any further suggestions.

21. A request was made for reference being made to transitional zones between agriculture and forestry and to montane scrub in the forthcoming update of the Cairngorm Forest and Woodland Framework.

Action Points

- CNPA to send out copies of the SEPA and NFU leaflets on waste disposal.
- CNPA to 'piggy back' on other meetings in order to publicise and promote the consultation on the Park Plan.
- CNPA to update on the action programmes for ILM, deer, biodiversity and landscape Priorities for Action at future ILMAF meetings.